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SACRED PRAISE:

AN EARNEST APPEAL

TO

CHRISTIAN WORSHIPERS,

IN

BEHALF OF A NEGLECTED DUTY.

BY

THOMAS HASTINGS,

AUTHOR OF VARIOUS MUSICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS.

"Let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord."
Psalm cl. 6.

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Preface.

The subject presented in this little volume is not a trivial one. It embraces questions which are worthy of the most serious consideration. These have for many years, claimed the earnest attention of the writer, under circumstances peculiarly favorable for a full and thorough investigation. He has given his best thoughts to the subject, and the following pages will show the result.

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SACRED PRAISE.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Praise, as presented in the Bible—As seen in our worshiping assemblies—It has suffered a great declension—Differences in taste, deficiencies in piety, &c., do not account for the change—A deeper cause—Wrong notions of mere musical efficiency—Originally the singers were personal worshipers.

PRAISE, as contemplated in the sacred Scriptures, is hallowed and delightful. It is as the voice of angels echoing amid the wastes of a fallen world. How pure, and how exalted is the language it employs! How multiplied, and how urgent are the exhortations of Scripture concerning it! No mention is made of a privileged few to the exclusion of the less favored many; while yet the importance of skill is fully maintained. The inspired precepts concerning praise, too, have great depth of meaning. Nor less remarkable are the

Scripture examples of praise. The singers of old were not dull or heartless. They were not sentimentalists engaged in amusement or in ostentation. They were devout, personal worshipers, speaking earnestly, conscious of the presence of omniscience. An employment so delightful was not confined to public occasions. It appeared in families. The sweet singer of Israel had his evening and his morning songs, and his songs in the night; and the maintenance of them, we may presume, was no less profitable than delightful.

Such is the character of praise as seen in the pages of inspiration. But how different does it appear in the Christian assemblies of modern days! Its beauty is tarnished. Its power is gone. Its form remains, but its spirit, in the multitude of cases, has departed. Go into the thousand churches of different denominations, and what do we see? For the most part, one of two extremes—either slothful indifference or active misdirection. Either the singing is rude and tasteless, or it is sustained chiefly on æsthetic principles to the detriment of devotion. There are occasional instances of a more favored nature; but these are comparatively

few. Generally speaking, the language of praise becomes powerless through inarticulate and irreverent utterance, and the singing is destitute of true meaning and expression. Exhortations to the duty of praise are extensively withholden or disregarded. Few of our leading minds seem willing to investigate the subject; and the numbers are less who exert their personal influence in its behalf. And where shall we find examples of praise which will bear comparison with those recorded in the Scriptures? Shall we look for them where skill has never been acquired? Shall we find them in hired or volunteer choirs—or in rehearsals, or concerts, or oratorios? Multitudes, who are here the most active, make no pretensions to piety, and would be displeased at the mere suspicion of personal solicitude on the subject of religion.

To refer to such details is exceedingly painful. We wish there was no necessity for doing so. But abuses will not be lessened by silence, or cured by neglect. They must be examined. We must search for the cause, and endeavor to apply the proper remedy. The search will not be diffi-

cult; and the application of the remedy will require no unreasonable amount of effort, if only it be from the right sources, in the right spirit, and in the right direction.

In regard to these abuses, it has been usual to refer to deficiencies in taste, to the indifference of congregations, and to the intractability of singers, as sufficient to render hopeless all efforts toward substantial improvement. But, why these deficiencies, and this indifference, and this intractability? Are they necessarily incident to praise? Reason, history, and the Scriptures forbid such a conclusion.

Some writers suppose that music necessarily has its strongest influence upon semi-barbarous communities,* and would lead us thence to infer that the cause of abuses is to be found in the influence of civilization. Wonderful discovery! So then, in consequence of the general improvement in society, in literature, and the arts, praise, as a sacred institution, is hereafter to become a dead letter!

Others look upon the low state of practical

* See Burney's History of Music.

piety as furnishing the solution of the difficulty. They tell us we shall never see the spirit of praise revived till the days of the millennium. But if this solution is the true one, how does it occur that at present the greatest neglecters of the subject are among the more spiritual members of a Church?

All these views of the subject are too limited and superficial. A deeper view is that which refers to the wide prevalence of wrong notions of *musical efficiency*. Exercises in praise, as we shall have occasion to show, ought so to unite the pleasures of song with the fervors of devotion as to give to the worshipers an increased interest in the sentiments of the words which are sung. This will be seen at once from the early history of the art, from the importance of the language we employ, and from the intelligent nature of our holy religion. It is evident, too, as we shall see, that real praise is an employment most solemn and spiritual, involving the same responsibilities which prevail in prayer. The singers are, as personal worshipers, to adopt the language which is before them as their own, and the lis-

teners are to yield to it, either audibly or inaudibly, their entire and devout concurrence. As this is in substance the Bible definition of praise, we shall adhere to it in the succeeding pages.

Throughout the whole period of Scripture history, this was the prevailing idea of praise; and in perfect accordance with it are the teachings of the Apostle Paul to the primitive churches. But, unhappily, in modern times, the idea has been set aside. Music has at length become a "heavenly" art. It attracts toward itself that measure of attention, which, in religious worship, is due to better things. Some evidence of this attraction, indeed, occurs as far back as in the time of the ancient fathers. One of the latter—Augustine—complains in his celebrated "Confession," that the sweetness of the music, while it wrought powerfully upon his sensibilities, would often give a wrong turn to his meditations. Another, less scrupulous in this respect, and at a later period in ecclesiastical history, compares the music to paintings, of which the sacred words were as pleasant borders. This, in musical practice even now, seems to be the popular idea.

The tune and the manner of performing it absorb attention, while the words, full of meaning and spirituality, seem often to be used as a mere excuse for singing. Many go so far as to regard verbal utterance unnecessary. And there are not wanting men in the profession, who consider "good music," however obtained, as an efficient instrument of religious edification. Others, however, driven by a natural reaction to the opposite extreme, would be for discarding every harmonic and melodic attraction. Nothing, in their view, but the plainest chants and the simplest chorals can be called appropriate. Others again, who have given no serious attention to the subject, seem wholly uninterested. Since their own devotions are seldom aided by the music, they are content to leave it in the hands of a committee among the secularities of the congregation. Yet all parties admit that "MUSIC" must be sustained as a "*necessary part* of public WORSHIP;" thus in every practical arrangement, making that which ought to be of secondary interest the thing chiefly contemplated.

The prevailing notions of talent, of style, and

of personal obligation, are just such as would naturally arise from these conflicting misconceptions of musical efficiency. The possession of talent, for instance, involves obligation. But excellence of skill, in the view of many, is placed so high above their reach as to furnish an available excuse for neglect. Others, regarding choir performances in the light of Sabbath concerts, are found to shrink from such conspicuity. Others again are unwilling to engage in performances which do not form an occasion for amusement or display; while many, despising such pretensions, are found, in the use of privilege, to give most unmusical utterances in the congregation, regardless of the tase or the comfort of their fellow-worshipers. Members of choirs too, are often in difficulty because their wants are not sufficiently cared for, their talents duly appreciated, or services properly rewarded. And to crown all, the pastor who must act prudently, unacquainted as he probably is with music, imagines that he can declare faithfully the whole council of God without dwelling on the duty of praise. He s es the prevailing abuses, and is sometimes deeply

grieved. But he is no *artist*. What has he to do with such matters?

These conflicting notions about musical efficiency, however, agree in one thing. They are all at variance with the obvious teaching of the Bible; and since they are so, and are of such long standing, and are connected with tendencies which are so widely disastrous, it is evident that we need look no further for the cause of decline and barrenness in public praise. In our teachings, arrangements, and appliances, we neglect to cultivate the spirit of praise, while we make that which was originally designed as an auxiliary concomitant, almost the sole object of attention and regard. What better results could have been expected from such a fundamental error in practical religion? Any similar mistake, in regard to preaching, exhortation, or prayer, would have proved equally disastrous to the spirituality of those exercises. Let mere elocution, for instance, become here the great object of interest, and we should soon see a lively illustration of the evils which arise from the practical errors we are describing. The Master of Assemblies ever

blesses the right observance of His own institutions. But when these are habitually abused and perverted, what wonder is it that the blasting and the mildew are upon us? The wonder is that such a fundamental error has not been visited with still greater evils.

CHAPTER II.

IMPORTANT PRELIMINARIES.

A remedy must be sought—No deficiency in natural gifts—All have talent—Theory explained—Different degrees of talent—Music for the Church necessarily simple—All who can speak might be taught to sing—Special difficulties—Processes of training—Examples in point—Decayed voices—May generally be restored.

To discover a cause of difficulty is often an easier matter than to prescribe an adequate remedy. How, in the presence of long established habits and prejudices in favor of error, shall this be done? This is now the chief question before us, and one which will necessarily occupy most of the succeeding pages. One thing is certain—the subject must be taken up in earnest. A few faint wishes, or a few isolated efforts, or fitful exertions will be of no avail. The work which is to be done requires well-concerted, vigorous, and persevering effort.

Here, however, we shall be met with the standing plea of a general deficiency in musical

gifts. Many who delight in the worship of the sanctuary do not believe it possible for them to learn to sing: and the numbers are still greater who imagine the task too difficult for their limited opportunities of instruction and practice. Tell them that ALL *might* learn to sing, and you are but heralding one of the ultraisms of the day. They deny it. They "know" it is not true. It is "contrary to observation and experience." What is it to them that the whole Prussian population for the last fifty years have actually been taught to sing? What if teachers on this side the Atlantic have long practiced upon this principle with success? These people will not concern themselves with the demonstration. Their mind is made up. They have tried the experiment in their own way, and to their entire conviction of inability.

The influence of this impression is disastrous. It undermines responsibility, discourages improvement, excuses neglect, and leads to almost every species of abuse. Singing must, of course, be maintained in the congregation; and if the multitude are really incapable of learning to

sing, then the few who have talent, be they saints or sinners, must assume the responsibility, and be left chiefly to their own direction. Unless this matter, therefore, can be so presented as to produce the necessary conviction upon the public mind, our appeal on the main subject before us will be of little avail.

The theory we wish here firmly to establish is, that all who have the power of speech are endowed by nature, to a greater or less degree, with the gift of song. That there are differences in degree of talent is not to be regretted. First-rate musicians in the greatest number, are not needed even for amusement One Beethoven as composer, might suffice for an entire generation. A single Lind or Sontag might satisfy the idolatry of half her cotemporaries. Artists of less ability are more numerous. These again are divided into first and second-rate performers; and as the gradation extends downward, in the scale of ability, to the plainest ballad-singers, the numbers are usually sufficient to afford amusement for the million.

But this is not all. Many voices, not suitable

for solos, are quite available in choruses. The massive combinations of this sort, in the oratorio, embrace many a voice which, heard alone, would be disagreeable, but which, coverd by powerful instrumentation, becomes effective and satisfactory. The same thing also occurs in the lighter species of secular music. Talent, which is very moderate, may in various ways be available.

All this is true, let it be remembered, where attention is exclusively devoted to æsthetic considerations, and where the mind is at leisure for the minutest criticism. But in exercises of praise the mind must be very differently occupied. The music must be of secondary interest. The prevalence of the true spirit of praise will lead us to overlook much that is deficient in manner. If the performances are, on the whole, well ordered, respectable, and impressively devout, they will disarm criticism, and the music then prove a delightful auxiliary of religious influences.

The style of music composed for the church, too, is for the most part very plain and unpre-

tending, compared with that of the secular department, requiring, of course, less powers of execution. We are not ignorant that some churches depart from this simplicity. But while they allow of copious and erudite selections from the mass, the oratorio, and even the opera,* we have yet to learn that they derive any spiritual advantage from the course they are pursuing. Taste in such circumstances is gratified, we fear, at the expense of devotion, and is not kept, as in the pulpit, under due subordination. We have no sympathy with those who attribute every thing to art. Fine music will often produce delight in time of worship, and this may not *always* in the case of individuals be unfavorable to devout meditation. But the mind under this fascination will generally be misguided. Music, therefore, which is less pretending, is the most suitable for the church. Now, if the question here before us were, whether every one could excel as an artist, we should answer unhesitatingly—no. The expectation would be as unreasonable as in relation

* We refer not here to occasional extracts of a simple kind.

to sculpture, to painting, or to poetry. But the question whether every one might not acquire sufficient skill in music to enable him to sing acceptably to others and to his own profit, in seasons of public and private devotion, is a very different one, in regard to the amount of talent; and one, therefore, which we are constrained to answer in the affirmative.

Speech embraces some of the elements of song. The quality of tone in either depends on the habitual treatment of vowels. The process of cultivation is simple, and every one can pursue it. But has every person an *ear* for the government of his voice in regard to musical scales? To this question we reply that the faculty is always an acquired one. It is never instinctive. The scales themselves are artificial, and it demands no little practice fully to master them. Pupilage, both in speech and in song, commences in infancy. As the infant by the mere power of imitation acquires one language as readily as another, so it learns a right or a wrong, a true or a false scale with about equal facility. Speech being necessary to the purposes of social life, we

take unwearied pains with the faltering accents of infancy, and feel well rewarded for our labor by the improved utterances. We consider this no hardship. We delight in it. Now, it is well ascertained that one tithe of this labor, rightly directed, would serve to produce a discriminating ear in regard to musical relations. But since music is not demanded for the ordinary purposes of life, the necessary assistance is commonly withholden. Every thing in respect to this development of skill, is left to accident. In such circumstances the slightest misdirection, however induced, eventuates in a wrong habit, which strengthens by subsequent practice.

Accordingly we find, on opening a large juvenile class, a few voices which, without individual training, will be perpetually out of scale. If these are neglected they will make no progress. Yet when noticed more closely, all, or most of them, will show *some* talent for the appreciation of graduated sound. They will usually, while jarring against each other, be pursuing some harmonic distances, such as a third, a fourth, a fifth, or an octave above or below the principal sounds.

Now it is remarkable that what they are thus endeavoring to do, in the perpetuation of an ill-formed habit, is really more difficult in itself considered, than what we wish them to do. These pupils, when there is leisure for individual training, are easily brought in a gradual manner to a just appreciation of intervals, after which they are not unfrequently found to excel. Yet without this special assistance their unfortunate habits would have been perpetuated. They might actually have been strengthened by repetitions in the class-room. This accounts for the fact that so many, even in families that are called musical, never succeed in learning to sing. Fortuitous developments in infancy are suffered to become habitual. And habits, whether right or wrong, strengthening by repetitions of effort, increase in tenacity with the lapse of years.

But happily these habits, though they acquire great strength, are not absolutely incurable. Time and patience, with intelligent instruction, are found in the hardest cases to insure success. A few examples of special training in infancy and

in riper years will not here be deemed out of place.*

A——, in early childhood, sung nothing but the monotone. This she had acquired by listening to the *one note*, by which a parent had uniformly hushed her to sleep. This habit of singing every thing upon one note would probably have been perpetuated but for the advantage in

* The process in dealing with such hard cases is very simple. Speech, as we have said, embraces some of the elements of song. A man while asking a question, for instance, will often elevate his voice about a tone or semitone with considerable uniformity; and when answering a question, will as often make a similar depression of voice. This, by careful practice, he will learn to do with more exactness as his power of discrimination improves. The following table exhibits the process to the eye as applied to music-syllables:

Quest.—Do, re?	*Ans.*—Re, do.
do, re? mi?	mi, re, do.
do, re? mi? faw?	faw, mi, re, do.
do, re? mi? faw? sol?	sol, faw, mi, re, do.
do, re? mi? faw? sol? la?	la, sol, faw, mi, re, do.

Thus by asking and by answering question upon question with the music syllables, a satisfactory idea is given of the ascending and descending scale. Then by the prolongation of vowels, speech is gradually changed into song. For a time the voice will be rough, and wanting in flexibility, and not be found to proceed safely alone. But as the pupil gains strength, the progress is accelerated, and by degrees the special guidance of the teacher's voice is withholden.

early life of a few brief lessons, after which she made rapid progress, and became an excellent singer.

The early efforts of B—— were so entirely out of scale that a superficial observer would have deemed her a hopeless case. But when it was ascertained that she had acquired with great accuracy the false intonation of a revered relative, she was regarded as a prodigy, and soon became an apt scholar, quite remarkable for good intonation. The truth was that her first achievement, for which she might easily have been rejected, was what few could have performed after months of hard drilling.

C—— early acquired, by some undiscovered means, the habit of singing uniformly a little below the proper pitch. Some would have regarded this as a native defect, yet, with slight prompting from day to day, the habit was effectually counteracted; and his intonation became remarkably accurate, and his ear discriminating.

D——, when very young, was laboriously drilled from day to day before he could be brought to sustain alone the melody of the simplest Psalm-

tune. He would lose his pitch insensibly, and not be able to regain it without assistance. The writer well remembers this case, for it was his own. The development of his voice and ear was slow, in consequence, perhaps, of bad singing by some of the older members of the family, who exhibited the same infirmity. Yet, while he has not been unsuccessful as a musician, others who manifested some precocity of genius, have made little progress in the art.

Such facts as these are very convincing and suggestive, and the detail might be lengthened to almost any extent.

Sometimes the mind receives an early bias which is unfortunate. E—— in her infancy manifested great fondness for music, but, in a year or two, grew indifferent, and in a little time became thoroughly disgusted with all singing. The alienation might have continued through life, but for the early discovery of the cause. Music, in this case, had been associated with stern discipline. The child was stubborn about going to sleep, and restless under confinement during the morning and evening hymns.

Individual Training.

Mrs. F—— in her early childhood met with such discouragement from her parents respecting her musical powers, that it had an unfavorable influence through life. She made good proficiency, and became a good singer, but her voice would always falter in the presence of an unwonted listener.

The late Mr. G—— in early childhood made such uncouth noises as to draw upon him the ridicule of the family circle. Yet, had he been duly tutored and encouraged, he might have exhibited remarkable talents: for afterward, under every disadvantage, he became a good singer, a useful teacher, and a respectable composer of plain psalmody.

H——, a pious, lovely youth, whose society was highly prized, had, it was supposed, a constitutional antipathy to music. He could not endure it. He had no affectation. He was simple-hearted and kind, but felt justified in absenting himself from every evening circle where he would be subject to musical annoyances. Some years later in life, however, while listening to a lecture on the subject of praise which exposed some of

the prevailing abuses, his antipathy was happily removed. "Oh," said he, "I now understand the secret of my difficulty. When my young friends used to practice psalmody for amusement in the midst of mirth and gayety, the exercise seemed so like profanation that I could not endure it. As I knew nothing of music, and as most of the singers were persons who could not be supposed to trifle with sacred things, I concluded the difficulty was within myself. But now I see the matter in a different light."

It was from a similar cause, perhaps, that the excellent Deacon J—— became remarkably indifferent to exercises in praise. They did not appear to be very profitable, he said. He could not enjoy them. He had no ear for music. He could never understand what there was in it which was serviceable to devotion, for he always felt relieved when the singing was ended. But in process of time a new choir was formed without his knowledge, and conducted on the strict basis of Christian principle. Soon he began to listen. From Sabbath to Sabbath he manifested increasing interest. "I know not how it is," he said;

A harder Case.

"I never cared for music. But when the singers began to *feel* what they were singing, the tears would flow. *This* is something that I can enjoy." Who will say that man had *naturally* no ear for music? There is good reason for supposing that both he and Mr. H—— might have been taught to sing.

But we will mention a harder case. The late Mr. K——, while young, made several unsuccessful attempts for the cultivation of his musical powers. These served, by repetitions of effort in the practice-room, only to confirm the bad habits he had fortuitously acquired in the nursery. This was a case which should have received special attention. But he was neglected. When nearly sixty years of age, however, he felt such a desire to unite with his family in singing the praises of God, that he determined, thus late in life, to accomplish that object if possible, by receiving private lessons. He had no practical knowledge which was available. He had not a discriminating ear. He could not form aright any single sound proposed to him. He was a man deeply immersed in the concerns of an extensive business

in a large city. Beyond each given hour of practice he could scarce give a thought to the subject. Yet, at such an age, and under all these disadvantages, he in a little time succeeded. After receiving about one quarter's private instruction from a teacher whose *class* he had once attended to no advantage, he could sing several tunes quite equal to the ordinary style of the lecture-room. So long as he practiced he continued to improve. In a few weeks, after he had gained his object, however, he was suddenly called to the sanctuary above, where we trust the everlasting song will be sweeter to him for having commenced his pupilage in the present world.

But why need cases be multiplied? The preceding ones, among many others equally suggestive, came under the writer's own observation, and he has reported them with sufficient detail for all the purposes of the argument. Could any thing be more decisive? To say nothing of experiments in other countries or by other teachers in our own country, the writer can affirm that for the last twenty years he has sought in vain for a single instance of one who could speak, and yet upon

All might succeed.

whose voice and ear no musical impression could be made. He pretends to no remarkable skill or discernment in the matter, but has been earnest, patient, and untiring in his investigations. And what is the result? Many have imagined themselves and others to be exceptions to the rule, and many, especially those advanced in years, would not have courage to make the trial, or sufficient perseverance to insure success. But this is not the fault of nature. The writer has often experimented upon classes of adults made up exclusively of such hard cases, and always with a measure of success proportioned to the industry and perseverance of the pupils. He has done this not for pleasure, nor from any doubt of its practicability, but for the sake of gaining testimony to this point for the satisfaction of others.

And now, when it is recollected that the earliest development of voice and ear is usually left to accident, that the ear is liable to every species of bias, and that taste is subjected to the unrestrained influence of prejudice and misrepresentation, who can wonder that so few become even tolerable singers? It is just what might have

been expected. In music, as in painting, nature gives us hints, susceptibilities, and materials; cultivation must do the rest.

There is a class of individuals, however, whom we must not forget to notice in this connection. We allude to those who, having been once tolerable singers, have gradually lost their powers, and who on this account excuse themselves from all activity on this subject. This diminution of powers, however, is usually the consequence of mere neglect in practice. Practice is not more necessary for the acquisition of skill than for the preservation of it. Neglect of practice necessarily leads to deterioration, while well-directed industry is rewarded with improvement. Defective intonation, rigidity of voice, shortness of breath, and other things of the sort, while physical health is unimpaired, will be sure to yield under the influence of well-ordered practice. The apology offered by this class of individuals, therefore, often amounts to a virtual confession of delinquency.

Practice is every thing. Let children receive early instruction, such as their cases require, and all may learn to sing. Let there be practice in

higher schools, in families, and in social circles, and all may easily retain the voice of song. The principle is obvious. Timely instruction for the development of musical powers, and practice for the preservation of them.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAIN QUESTION—WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The enterprise a practical one—Several things necessary to its accomplishment.

HAVING disposed of some important preliminaries, we are prepared to enter directly on the main question of this appeal—What can be done to restore to exercises of praise, their proper characteristics and influences? The enterprise is doubtless a practical one. It must be so, for praise is a form of worship instituted for the glory of God and the benefit of his people through all time. How then shall the work be accomplished?

SECTION I.

The subject requires prayerful consideration—It is worthy of it.

In the first place, the undertaking must be made a subject for prayerful consideration. It is no trifling matter. The question whether praise

is to be desecrated or to be redeemed from its abuses and restored to its appropriate beauty and spirituality, is surely one which is adapted to call forth deep solicitude. It is not simply a question of musical improvement. The great themes of salvation are taken in hand; how shall they be treated? Shall they be abused and trifled with in the Divine presence, or shall they be cherished, illustrated, and enforced? To withhold solicitude in reference to such a subject as this, is to be guilty of unfaithfulness. The same may be said of prayer on this behalf. Nothing can be achieved without it. Yet, how seldom are our supplications offered on behalf of this subject? This is wrong. There must be earnest inquiry, believing expectation and fervent prayer. To speak here of impracticabilities would be displeasing to Him who knows no worshipers but those who are spiritual. Many we have seen treat the whole subject with neglect. Many are satisfied with giving an occasional pittance toward "sustaining the music." Others who have talent and influence, withhold exertions which there is reason to suppose would be beneficial. And there

Christian Activity.

are yet others who, fixing their attention upon the singing, indulge themselves in censures or commendations, much as if they were attending a concert. All this again we say is wrong. It must be done away. The work to be accomplished must be undertaken in the fear of God, and with reference to the promotion of his glory; and in no other way will it succeed.

SECTION II.

The undertaking requires Christian laborers—Reasons—Efforts must be earnest and appropriate.

The undertaking must be prosecuted *chiefly* by Christians. Nothing can be more evident than this. Can we look for spiritual improvement from those who are not spiritual? Too long have we been waiting for such an impossibility. It is time for Christians to take their place *as leaders* in this service. If deficient in musical skill, the remedy is before them. Let them have recourse to instruction and practice. Many churches, we are aware, excuse themselves

on the ground of musical deficiency. But this will never do. The apology is unsound. If what we have said in regard to natural gifts is true, every church will doubtless embrace within itself, an abundance of natural talent which can be rendered available. And it should be remembered that the possession of gifts implies obligation.

Too much reliance, as we have seen, has been placed on mere *musical efficiency*. This may answer for secular ends, but not for those which are truly spiritual. Because music has such power over native and cultivated susceptibilities, has it therefore the power of producing influences which are supernatural? Can it do the very office-work of the Holy Spirit? How absurd and monstrous is the supposition! As well might the same thing be affirmed of elocution in preaching or exhortation. This has its advantages which ought, perhaps, to be more highly prized. Yet, what are they in this relation unless the speaker has some pretensions to personal piety? We are always watchful and jealous over the influence of fine speaking. We know that it *may* prove a

snare to us. The same watchful jealousy should be exercised in regard to church music, which is of a refined character. If the singers are *mere performers*, something more than jealousy is demanded. The influences, in a religious point of view, will, of necessity, be unsound and superficial.

Are those who know nothing of experimental religion to be regarded as the best instruments for promoting it in the office of praise? Look at the language of our songs in this connection. How hallowed, how full of meaning. How impressive. Shall it be the office-work of the impenitent to sing us into tender contrition? Shall the careless and the indifferent be the ones to awaken the supine and the slothful? Shall those who see nothing in the Saviour, why they should desire him be expected to charm us with his love, by the mere "concord of sweet sounds?" Shall the ungrateful, the unbelieving, the rebellious, wholly unreconciled to God, and averse to Divine things —shall these be the very ones to excite us by their minstrelsy, to lively gratitude, to humble confidence in God, to holy delight in the Divine

government, and in the adorable perfections of the Most High? How preposterous the expectation! The thing can not be. It is contrary to the true order of instrumentality. God may in his mercy regard the circumstance of ignorance, which is not voluntary, and he may overrule wickedness for good. But we can not expect him to smile graciously upon the unfaithful, and the unhallowed observance of his own institutions. This he will never do. He will honor those who honor him; not those who rob him of the glory due to his name. And what have the wicked to do, treading his courts as *leaders* in such a hallowed service as this? Let the unconverted *join* in the songs of Zion, if they will do so with becoming decency and solemnity. We would not hinder them any more than in reference to prayer. But Christians alone can become efficient leaders in the hallowed enterprise. Just so long as it remains in other hands, the abuses will continue.

We would not undervalue the taste, the kind feeling, the public spirit, the wonderful perseverance which have often been manifested in sustaining the *music* of the church by those who have

Is indispensable.

only a general reverence for religious institutions. Nor do we wonder that their patience should have been sorely tried by witnessing the apathy of the church in regard to their efforts. Nor do we think it strange that professors of religion, while under the influence of a worldly spirit, should sometimes have been guided exclusively by their counsels.

Nor will we presume to say that the churches have derived no benefit from such exertions. But there has been wrong every where: and if this is to be done away, Christians must become the special actors. This is reasonable. No other agency will succeed. The great ends of spiritual worship will not otherwise be secured. Singers may be variously employed, as artists or as volunteer performers. We may have recourse to the untutored congregational style. We may sing with the organ or without it: or we may change the character of the music by never-ending inventions or devices: and we may marvel, too, at the frustration of plans and the instability of arrangements. But all will be to no purpose while the main requisite is wanting. Direct, decided

Influence and Intelligence.

Christian influence must be the life-giving spirit of the enterprise. Christians have a susceptible conscience. Let this be enlightened, and their efforts can be secured. Let such efforts be duly sustained, and, under the Divine guidance and blessing, they will be attended with success.

SECTION III.

Christians of influence and intelligence must become active—Reasons—No apology for neglect.

Persons of influence and intelligence in the church must put their hand to the work. Such an interest as this should not be confided to the ignorant, to the inexperienced, or to those who are weak in influence or weak in faith. If taste and skill in music were the things chiefly in view, there might be some shadow of reason for neglect; for enlightened minds would not expect much benefit from the exclusive promotion of such properties. This very idea may have had its influence with the community. Those who are distinguished for intelligent, consistent piety, go to the

house of God not to be amused, not to be entertained by the sentimentalities of the place, not to yield themselves in a passive way to whatever appliances may be brought to bear upon them. Their religion is one of principle as well as of feeling. They go to engage intelligently in solemn communion with things unseen. Mere objects of taste, therefore, are rightly regarded as of secondary importance. Many of this class of Christians are dissatisfied with the manner in which praise is conducted. They witness so much of heartlessness and of mismanagement and misrule in psalmody as to induce discouragement. They have acquired no fondness for such music; and, judging from past experience, have little expectation of benefit from it.

There is, however, especially in large cities, a class of Christians who err in a different extreme. Secular music is taught in their parlors. They have frequented the concert-room and the oratorio as lovers of art. For psalmody they have acquired no taste. Accustomed in the concert-room to give exclusive attention to the performances, and to praise or censure them as they seem to de

serve, they carry the same habit with them at church. They know of nothing better. If the music displeases them, it hinders their devotions. If it is artistic, it answers well as a drop-scene in the exercises. Yet being in the minority as to numbers, they can seldom have the arrangements to their liking, and learn like others to treat the subject with neglect.

Now all this abandonment of the interests of praise is wrong. Let motives be what they may, the case is not materially altered. No desertion of a cause so precious as this can find a sufficient warrant in Scripture or reason. The neglecters have much to learn on their own account. Their views of religious music are vague and inconsistent. They know not what they need, or what they should do in regard to it. The difference here between æsthetics and devotion, though heaven-wide in its claims and influences, is not well understood. Their practical notions, habits of thinking, prejudices and associations in reference to this interest, must be re-examined in the light of Scripture truth. And if men of education, and piety, and influence greatly need this on

their own account, they need it still more in reference to others around them who will be influenced by their opinions and examples. If a reform is undertaken in the manner and spirit of praise, such men must bestir themselves. We speak plainly on this subject, for there is abundant cause. When good men, even the best of men, are unwittingly misled, it is time for somebody to speak out in all truth and faithfulness, that error may be seen and corrected. In the present case, a new public sentiment is to be induced and acted upon; and to this end the assistance and co-operation of influential men is indispensable. Whatever views of duty they entertain regarding their own personal improvement in practical skill, their present position and policy must be changed. They must stand out of the way. Nay, they must become *active*—must become *leaders* in the enterprise. They must give it a distinct and permanent character. This will never be done by minds of secondary mold. These will not possess the necessary discrimination. It requires ripeness of Christian experience; it requires a knowledge of mental science

and of human nature. The thing to be accomplished is no trifle. It is not the work of an hour or a day. It calls for talent aside from the teachings of art; it calls for perseverance. The work of praise, like that of prayer, is one which will never promote itself, and never be finished while the world remains, or while there are Divine perfections to be celebrated.

CHAPTER IV.

Efforts to be based upon the teachings of Scripture—Teachings of art not undervalued—Must not conflict with the Bible.

Efforts must be based upon the teachings of the holy Scriptures. As the office of praise has been established by Divine authority, we must look to the Bible for the principles which should guide us in sustaining it. The teachings of art have their importance. We can not dispense with them. Yet even these must be submitted to the unerring standard. If, in the matter before us, they speak not in accordance with this, they must thus far be discountenanced and resisted. The same is true as to the prevailing notions, prejudices, and speculations of men. They are too vague, too contradictory and erroneous, to be taken as authority. "What saith the Scriptures?" "To the law and to the testimony." In all the more essential elements of praise, the Bible is our only sure guide. Its teachings, however, are sufficiently plain and definite.

SECTION I.

The praises of God are to be *sung*—Other methods not to be substituted—Objections answered.

We are *required to sing* the praises of God. The requirement is as general as that which relates to prayer. If we are to pray without ceasing, we are in every thing to give thanks. The practice is not merely recommended, it is solemnly enjoined. We have seen also that Nature furnishes no excuse for the neglect of such exercises. How far the want of early culture producing obstacles in the way of subsequent training, may serve to modify present obligation in individual cases, we pretend not to determine. We have not the least doubt, however, that multitudes who now sit as silent worshipers, ought to learn to sing. We will add, too, that in other cases, the smallest amount of talent may answer the ends of *private* devotion. While the heart overflows with gratitude, and love, and holy joy, it naturally seeks to express itself in audible chantings, or fragments of song. Many an individual, unable to sustain the melody of a regular tune, has acquired this habit, and found the pre-

Action of Singing.

ciousness of thus holding secret communion at the mercy-seat, with things unseen and spiritual. And why should not skill be augmented in such cases, as it easily might be by private training?

Some tell us, that, since they are unable to sing, they prefer to give thanks in speech during exercises of prayer. This, in any case, they should not fail to do. Exercises of praise, too, include petitions and supplications to be offered in song. Will the observance of the one form of exercises excuse us in the neglect of the other? What would be thought of that professor of religion who should conclude to offer all his supplications in song? Two distinct methods of addressing the throne of grace have been prescribed to us. We need them both, and neither of them should be neglected.

SECTION II.

What is the *action* of singing?—Not simply musical—Language must be illustrated and enforced—Objections—Music itself a language—Claim of verbal utterance not to be set aside.

But what is the *action of singing* required of us in praise? Not, certainly, that which some of

the ancient fathers supposed—the performance of beautiful music to which words are subsidiary. Such an idea would be preposterous. It would be placing art in the foreground, and the subject-matter in the shade. It would be making religion the mere servant of taste. The idea, to be sure, is sufficiently artistic. We meet with it in the concert-room, and at the oratorio, where the express object is æsthetical. But, however admissible it is supposed to be in those connections, it is inconsistent with the purposes of worship. Here, from the nature of the case, the consecrated text must form the basis of the exercise.

It is an instructive fact, that, while in the providence of God, not a single strain of music has been preserved, which is *known* to have been sung during the period of biblical history, a multitude of the poetic themes of song are found on the pages of inspiration, for the use of the church, to the remotest ages of time. Does this look as if words were of mere secondary import? Why should mere borders of paintings be so long and so carefully preserved, after the figures of the canvas have been obliterated?

To Verbal Utterance.

But we need not dwell on this species of argument. There is a fact established in musical history, which is entirely decisive. During the whole period in which the Scriptures were written, singing was understood to be a refined species of *verbal* utterance. This utterance must have been, more or less, rhythmical and melodious. But it was designed to be distinct, earnest, and impressive. This, artists themselves must acknowledge. Then, we say, let them remember this definition of song, and be guided by it, and not presume in church music to depart from the spirit of a rule which is given by inspiration.

Many, however, plead that the language is altogether too rough for musical purposes. Allow this to be true, and nothing exaggerated. Is this any reason why the language should be rendered unintelligible? Paul thought differently. He tells the Corinthian brethren that he had rather hear five words in a language that can be understood, than ten thousand in a tongue unknown. And he draws his illustration of the principle from praise as well as from prayer.

Objections.

Again, we shall be told that in large churches, the choir placed behind the congregation, and accompanied with a powerful instrument, are unable to give a distinct utterance of words. Such an embarassment, we admit, is often very trying. But who has created it? Not, surely, the Master of Assemblies. The parties who have done so must be responsible. The Bible never authorises us to place the leading singers out of hearing, or to drown their utterances by overpowering instrumentation. But "books are before us which contain the words." True; yet in multitudes of cases they lie unopened, and the people are ignorant of what is sung, except as memory is exercised. Looking upon the words of a printed page, too, is but a poor compensation for indistinctness of utterance. We should certainly so regard it, in reference to preaching, to exhortation, or to prayer. We need the impressive utterances of a distinct, impassioned delivery. These, in some way, we *can have*. We *must* have them, if we would follow the Scripture rule.

But here comes an artist, enamored by the inimitable productions of the masters. Music, he

tells us, has become itself a language, and one which is so distinct and powerful as to do away the necessity of verbal utterance. Indeed! Is the man wiser than the pages of inspiration! But suppose him in some high artistic sense to be partially correct. Let him then come forward with his exhibitions of skill. Let him have every possible advantage. Give him all the performers of a modern orchestra. Give him all the instruments that celebrated Nebuchadnezzar's image. Or, if he pleases, let him have the poet's

"Gun, drum, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder."

Now let him play us, if he can, a musical translation of the twenty-third or the hundred and forty-eighth Psalm, which would be intelligible to any man living! Far be it from us to undervalue the *real* achievements of art. But such baseless pretensions, common as they have been, are deserving only of ridicule.

Such are some of the subterfuges usually resorted to, by those who endeavor to set aside the claims of verbal utterance. They are easily dealt with. But there is another question of great

importance, which must be decided by the same unerring authority.

SECTION III.

Personated devotion—Generally prevalent—Opposed to Apostolic teaching—Should not be tolerated—Reasons.

Does the Bible sanction a *personated* devotion in exercises of praise? One would suppose it to do so, who should judge by the living examples which surround him. This, indeed, would seem to be the prevailing idea. Few, perhaps, are prepared to say that heartless worship in song can be accepted. But the language of customary arrangements, and practices, and negligences, certainly argues great looseness of apprehension in this matter. The question, therefore, demands a careful examination. Let us turn once more to the infallible guide. The *examples* of praise, recorded in the Bible, are full of instruction, and quite to the purpose in hand. Surely such persons as David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthan, and Jehoshaphat, and Simeon, and Paul, and Silas were not mere sentimentalists, mere

personators of devotion. The angels at the nativity were not giving a serenade for the amusement of the shepherds. Their song was the full outpouring of holy joy. The same inference may be drawn from an examination of many of the inspired themes of song. Though these embrace a great variety of topics, they include some of the most spiritual, the most elevated, and most sublime portions of the Bible. Ought these to be sung in public worship as the mere exercises of the concert-room! Or should not the utterance proceed from hearts enlivened by a spiritual apprehension of Divine things? Paul answers this question. In his epistles to the primitive churches, he is very explicit. See Ephesians v. 18, 19; and Colossians, iii. 16. Here we have in the first place what might be termed the prerequisites of song, "Be filled with the Spirit," and "Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom." In the second place we have the manner of utterance—"*speaking* to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing*," and "teaching and admonishing . . . *singing*." And lastly, we have what is required of us as

personal worshipers—"*Making* melody *in your hearts to the Lord*," and "*singing* with *grace in your hearts* to the Lord." Nothing could be plainer. Here is no ground for personation. Singers are to be personal, spiritual worshipers. Certainly this is Paul's view. We see then what is required of us; and Scripture rules must stand, whatever becomes of the counsels and traditions of men. There is talent enough in the churches. Let this be matured and there will be no need of personators.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE IN SCHOOLS, IN REHEARSALS, AND IN FAMILIES?

SECTION I.

Adult Schools—These must have a specific character—Reasons—Mental associations—Spiritual influences—These must be promoted and cherished—Ordinary religious preparations not sufficient—Why—Objections answered—Elemental knowledge.

Schools and rehearsals of church music must have a character adapted to the object we are contemplating. There are several reasons for this. One is found in the well-known influence of mental associations. Cowper says:

> "Wherever I have heard
> A kindred melody, the scene revives,
> And with it all its pleasures and its pains."

This is not poetic exaggeration, but simple truth. The power of such associations can scarcely be over-estimated. It is often greater in many respects than that of harmony, melody, and rhythm

Adult Schools.

combined: yet it has been little thought of in this connection. Adult schools and rehearsals of psalmody, during the past half century, have, in most instances, been little else than social gatherings for amusement. Such an arrangement might answer for the practice of catches and glees. Here some measure of mirth would be indispensable; for in music, as in oratory, one must enter fully into the subject before him, if he would do it justice. But to cultivate devotional music in the same mirthful spirit, would be exceedingly absurd. It would be as far removed from the true principles of art, as from the claims of religion. And here is seen one of the most fruitful sources of that irreverence and misrule which have so frequently disgraced choir performances in our worshiping assemblies. Associations of thoughtlessness and levity have been so intimately blended with strains of psalmody in the practice-room, as to destroy all feeling of reverence and solemnity. Such a result from such a practice was inevitable. Singers thus trained, learn to speak forth with boldness and inconsideration, such solemn language as would fill them with

trembling if they fully apprehended its import. This is very sad; and yet it is a thing so common as scarcely to excite observation.

Irrelevant associations are not confined to schools and rehearsals of a lower order. They often abound where we look for better things. The teacher, it may be, wishes to treat sacred subjects in a becoming manner: but he is habitually of a peevish or a merry temperament, and will be sure to leave his own impress upon the mind of his pupils. Or if he is a dry mechanist or an excitable sentimentalist, a similar result will follow, unless his influence is in some way counteracted. And doubtless much of the dullness and the irrelevant emotion which attend exercises in praise may be traced to this very source.

Wrong associations and feelings can be prevented only by establishing right ones. We must preoccupy the mind with relevant associations, if we would escape from such as are unfavorable to devotion. This is our only alternative. Many will not believe it. Why, they ask, may not music be cultivated as painting, and poetry, and other arts are cultivated? Such questions have

some measure of plausibility, and good men are often misled by them. But it should be remembered that the chief object of such schools and rehearsals is not to produce artists, but to secure such musical appliances to sacred words as shall render them more impressive and more devotional. This object will of necessity be defeated, unless the practice of psalmody is accompanied with relevant influences. This is a principle the truth of which can not reasonably be questioned. Just such influences as have been habitually sown in the practice-room are sure to spring up for good or for ill in the solemn assembly.

It must be recollected, however, that associations and feelings may have some relevancy to religion without being what, in the evangelical sense, would be deemed spiritual. If the object before us were merely the promotion of æsthetic influences, the measure we are insisting upon would not be useless: but since we have chiefly in view a far nobler one, how is the importance of the measure augmented! Spiritual influences come into the heart of the worshiper, it is true, only by a gracious implantation. But it is equally

true that they will never spring up and flourish in the midst of our indifference and neglect. That is impossible. Nor let it be imagined that *general* preparations for worship will here suffice. Praise, employing as it does the appliances of art to verbal utterances in the Divine presence, has claims of a special nature. It demands the formation of certain habits which are resultant from right practice. Practice of some sort we necessarily have, which is never without its influence upon our devotions. Is it of no consequence, then, whether this practice be right or wrong? What we ask for is the adoption of the same principle in rehearsals which all allow to be essential in preparations for the pulpit. How are singers to worship in the spirit if, in all their rehearsals, they make no effort for the promotion of spirituality? This will never be.

Doubtless we shall here meet with many an objection. Decency, and order, and gravity, and some measure of emotion in reference to the hymns in practice, will be deemed appropriate; but to convert the practice-room into a place for exhorta-

tion, prayer, and praise, would be as impracticable as unwise.

But we are not pleading for such an entire change; we ask for religious influences just so far as they may be necessary to secure the desired object. Of course, criticism and worship are distinct things. They can not be combined in any single exercise. The one draws the mind downward to musical observances, the other raises it upward in the contemplation of heavenly things. Each position of the mind is right in its place. But we need practice which will assist us in our upward aspirations, by freeing us from every artistic entanglement. This we must have, to some extent, in the practice-room, or artistic considerations will constantly ensnare us. Nor would there be any thing incongruous in such an arrangement as has been suggested. If, in the ordinary course of worldly employments, we can find occasional parentheses for prayer and praise, how much easier can we find them in evenings which are specially devoted to improvement in psalmody. The wonder is, that such an obvious duty should ever have been questioned. Among all meetings for benev-

olent objects, and for religious improvement and consultation, with this single exception, we engage more or less in devotional exercises. But preparations for praise have been given over to the dictations of art. The office-work of angels, so to speak, has been committed to the muses, as if taste were the chosen goddess of our idolatries! This is palpably absurd, and must always lead to disappointment. Taste never appears in lovelier character than when it ministers in humble subservience to divine things.

It is an unfortunate circumstance that a competent knowledge of rudiments is so seldom gained in early life. If the fact were otherwise, much of the difficulty now experienced in adult classes would be removed. At present the claims of notation, of rhythm, of melody, of style, of verbal utterance, of sentiment, and of expression, are necessarily crowded into the exercises of each successive evening, because of the general ignorance in such matters, and because of the brief period allotted to instruction. Every thing deemed essential must be inculcated in a little time, through the hurry of incessant application. Un-

der such circumstances, how easy is it for relig ious exercises to be excluded.

Secular music knows nothing of these embarrassments. Sentimentalities are there easily excited and regulated. Sufficient time also is usually allowed for the accomplishment of reasonable expectations. But as circumstances, in reference to psalmody, are so entirely different, it is easy to see that methods of instruction and practice, in relation to it, ought to be greatly modified. Every thing in this respect is at loose ends. Most teachers do their work very imperfectly. One who excels in notation, for instance, will occupy most of the period allotted him, in teaching his pupils to *read* music. Another, who prides himself on being a good timeist, will dwell disproportionately upon rhythm. A third, for a similar reason, will train his pupils chiefly in melody and harmony. A fourth, who neglects some of the preceding elements, will dwell on dynamics, or vocal delivery; while a fifth, more rarely met with, cares for nothing but sentiment. But where is the teacher who dwells on these elements in due economical portions of time?

In teaching.

If artistic excellence were here the chief object to be obtained, we might well despair of success. But the case is far otherwise. We do not need the talents of a Mara or a Sontag, for instance, to enable us to maintain, in song, the earnest pleadings of the 51st Psalm, or the hallowed ascriptions of the 148th. A heart melted into supplication, or elevated in holy joy, would prove far more edifying, though possessing mediocrity of talent. The spirit of praise takes precedence of the manner of it, and finds a sweet response in the heart of every spiritual worshiper. Hence, for the purpose of singing, such as psalmody requires the *necessary* attainments are so moderate as to be gained by a reasonable amount of well directed training.

Artistic refinements in style are extensive and difficult. They are, more or less, of an adventitious character, always crying, "give, give." A man might spend his whole life upon them, and still be a learner. But such things would be mere impertinences in public worship. How evident is it, therefore, that instructions in devotional music should be methodical and appropriate.

SECTION II.

Children must be instructed—Musical exercises give them pleasure—Physical, social, and religious advantages—Easily trained—Bearings upon the subject before us.

Children must be early taught to sing. This, as before hinted, is in accordance with the suggestions of nature. If pupilage actually commences in infancy, and if a right or a wrong scale is then acquired with about equal facility, by imitation, it must be very unwise to leave every thing, in respect to voice and ear, to the influence of accident. A little prompting, as in reference to speech, would usually suffice for the earliest stages of culture. The subject of notation and style should be pursued in juvenile years. Children are found to make rapid progress in the elements of music. The exercises are not dreaded as tasks; but form a pleasant relief from severer studies. They are conducive to health, and to gentleness, and quietness of disposition. Miscellaneous songs, filled with pleasing incidents, good sentiments, and sound principles, social, moral, and religious, may have a happy influence on the formation of character. But the bearing which

this instruction has upon religious music is exceedingly important. The history of modern cultivation, shows thus far, that most of those who neglect music in early years, will neglect it through life. But let all the children be trained, and in a few years the entire community may unite in chorus. And then how different would be the details of practice in adult classes. Every thing elementary would not, as now, be found to engross the attention. Adult schools might then be "schools of the prophets," and rehearsals be precious seasons of preparation for the worship of the sanctuary. The praises of God can not wait for such a consummation. Yet, if we would be thorough in the work of improvement, we must look well to the instruction of children.

SECTION III.

Devotional singing in families—Its importance—Neglect—Abuses—Characteristics and advantages—Influence upon congregational singing—Parlor music—Its influence often prejudicial—Not adapted to the object before us.

Devotional singing must be reinstated in family worship. The Bible, as well as the practice of

primitive Christians, is in its favor. The Psalmist says, "Every day will I praise thee," "At midnight will I rise to give thanks." The Apostle says, "In every thing give thanks," "Giving thanks always."* Why should the practice in these later times be so extensively laid aside? We consider it a great sin to neglect family prayer, and truly it is so. But is it no sin to omit offerings of praise, for mercies which we are daily receiving in *answer* to prayer? The methods of worship are both needed, and neither of them was ever intended as a substitute for the other.

Praise, rightly conducted in the family, proves a delightful employment. It becomes a heavenly privilege. It leads the mind away for a little moment from the consideration of personal wants and circumstances, to a contemplation of the perfections, the works, and the redemptive and providential dealings of God. It gives enlargement to the heart. It chastens and subdues the affections. The language it employs is remarkable

* And we have seen what the Bible intends by such directions.

for spirituality. It is such as is heard with holy delight in the dwelling-place above.

We refer not here to *mere musical practice*, which is too often substituted for real devotion. What we ask, is the restoration of solemn, spiritual exercises, to which practice, however well conducted, is merely preparatory. Wrong habits that have been indulged, it is true, will not be overcome without a struggle. The desired influence, for a time, will not be realized. The efforts at first will be too labored for enjoyment. But through the Divine blessing, the issue will ultimately come. The spirit of praise will then accompany the accents of the poetry and the song, just as the spirit of prayer accompanies, and adds interest to the language of our supplications.

But what an argument is the one now before us. The formation of right habits in praise is quite essential to the utility of the exercise, whether at home or in the solemn assembly. The heavenward direction of the mind, so essential to all devotion, will not be maintained without habitual effort. The man who neglects family prayer will find no liberty if he attempt to pray in the so-

cial circle. If he neglects daily meditation, his thoughts will wander on the Sabbath. He can not even give for benevolent purposes with Christian simplicity unless, by frequent efforts of the kind, he forms and sustains the habit of true liberality. It would be strange, indeed, if exercises in praise were to form an exception to so fixed a rule of influences. They evidently do not. The man who would any where enjoy exercises of praise in a Christian manner, at least if he is a singer, must be, day by day, in the habit of devotional utterances in song. The rule would seem to be just as positive as in regard to prayer.

The music of the parlor is not without its importance in this connection. Though chiefly secular, it possesses some advantages. Rightly ordered, it becomes a pleasant relief from the burdens of care, and a sweet soother of disturbing influences. It promotes kindliness of feeling, virtuous sensibility, and refinement. There is little question among intelligent Christians as to its utility. But what an amount of practice is demanded for the maintenance of parlor music! Instruction is given for years in the acquisition

of skill: yet this skill will be gradually diminishing from the very hour that regular practice is laid aside.

All this instruction and practice in parlor music too, we fear, is, in the multitude of cases, of little or no advantage to devotional singing. It does absolutely nothing toward promoting the true manner or spirit of praise. Artistic and devotional training in music are often opposed to each other. The one would secure a polished enunciation at the expense of language, the other would prefer distinctness to mere euphony. The one would dwell disproportionately upon conventional graces and ornaments of style which are destined, like fashions in dress, to pass away and be forgotten; the other, rejecting these, would labor to maintain chaste simplicity in connection with the more essential and permanent features of style. The one cherishes earthly associations, the other, those which are heavenly and divine. Of the two systems thus in conflict, the more popular one is liable to gain the ascendancy, if not wholly to displace the other. The ambition of a doating parent is ready to make sacrifices. To have his

daughter become a second-rate imitator of some favorite prima donna, he is told to keep her from the practice of psalmody. If she is ever to excel as a songstress, the injunction of her teacher, reasonable or unreasonable, must be obeyed. This, in large cities, is a very common case, and one, we are sorry to say, which often occurs in Christian families. The splendid instrument of the parlor thus bears daily testimony that the claims of art are deemed of more importance to the family than the praises of God! What should be thought of such a decision? What would angels think of it? How must it appear in the light of eternity!

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT IS REQUIRED IN THE SELECTION OF TUNES.

Prevalent causes of dissatisfaction—Old tunes *vs.* new—Taste necessarily progressive—Congregations and choirs should come to an understanding, and be governed by a Christian spirit.

THE selection of tunes for public worship is a matter which in many ways occasions dissatisfaction. To say nothing of the claims of rival publishers whose livelihood is, in part, derived from the sale of music-books, and, in consequence of which, self-interest sometimes takes precedence of sound judgment and enlightened taste, we see enough in the circumstances of many congregations to show that cordial unanimity in the selection of tunes is not always easily secured. Preferences are various and contradictory. Every one has his own notions. Those who in earlier life were leading singers, but have since relinquished the practice, are generally in favor of old tunes —why should not these always be preferred?

Such people reason just as if all progress in taste had ceased at the close of their own efforts. Yet were they to resume the practice, they would cease their murmurings. Changes in selection, even in their own case, would be found essential.

Choirs, too, are often unreasonable in this matter. They have too little regard for the existing circumstances of the worshipers. Higher interests are involved than those of personal convenience or gratification. The people can not worship in a tune which displeases them. An impression of some sort is to be made upon them. Shall it be for good or for ill? The Master of Assemblies proposes to receive the homage of his people—will it arise from the lips of murmurers?

In all such cases the parties should come to a mutual understanding. The matter should not be deferred. What if there is no outbreak of decided displeasure? Devotion is hindered and paralyzed: and this is a sufficient reason for mutual inquiry and condescension. Such troubles are not peculiar to the present generation. They

have long been known, and they will continue to occur while personal responsibility in the matter is so imperfectly apprehended. If Christians wish to be benefited by exercises in praise, they must in some way become active.

But again—cultivators of psalmody are often at variance on this subject. Some are for progress in modern productions. Others are for chiefly discarding them. Some, in defiance of unhallowed associations, would bring forward strains from the theater, from the hand-organ, the street-minstrel, or the hurdy-gurdy. Others, on the contrary, can see nothing devotional except in the chants and chorals of olden times. Such wide extremes do not *always* exist in the same neighborhood, but they are injurious and must be done away. Progress is needful, but it may be too hasty and in wrong directions. A veneration for the productions of antiquity has its advantages, but it must not be exclusive. In music, as in painting, and poetry, and sculpture, every coming generation should be largely benefited by its own productions. This is reasonable: it is in accordance with the interests of religion

as well as with those of taste. The sermons and treatises of the sixteenth century may furnish the modern pulpit and press with valuable hints and materials; but we prefer to use those of our own times for *general* instruction. The principle extends also to hymnology. Why, then, should we go back in our selections of church music to the tunes of that period, when melody, after all, is acknowledged to be a short-lived, evanescent thing? Old hymns and old tunes should be blended, to some extent, with new ones: but the selection should have reference to real utility, rather than to age. Adaptations from secular music should be received with great caution. If fully *recognized* they will have an unhallowed influence. A strain thus borrowed may appear sufficiently solemn to those unacquainted with its origin—while to others it may bring nothing better to mind than the dramatic mimicries of worship.

The time, perhaps, has not yet come when well ordered selections and arrangements of psalmody can be established. But come it must in the progress of reform. Intelligent Christian

Experience must decide.

experience must be our ultimate guide. What is thus found to be of a devotional tendency can be approved while the rest is set aside. Such difficulties as we are here describing will then be of short duration. In the presence of a sweet devotional spirit, they will disappear like mists of the morning before the rising sun.

CHAPTER VII.

Methods of conducting Exercises in Praise—Congregational singing not the *only* primitive Method—An artistic Quartette, devotional or æsthetic?—A volunteer Choir rightly selected and conducted—Its superior Advantages—Voices of the Congregation should unite with it to a greater extent—Abuses many and flagrant—Must be done away.

THE method of conducting praise, whether by a precentor, or quartette, or volunteer choir, either with or without accompaniment, is a matter about which, at the present time, there is much diversity of opinion and practice. In some instances the same congregation proceed from method to method, almost with continued dissatisfaction. Like the man in a fever, they

> "Shift from side to side by turns,
> And 'tis a poor relief they gain
> To change the place but keep the pain."

Filled with wrong notions of musical efficiency they try every plan but the right one, and continue to be unsuccessful.

Where there has been much cultivation, an assembly may for a while so follow the lead of a precentor as to sing with decency and with Christian satisfaction. But the neglect of practice which thence ensues necessarily leads to deterioration; while many will become so partial to this method, as to insist on its continuance long after it becomes, in the opinion of others, unendurable. Such is the testimony of past experience. This method has been said to be most in accordance with the Scriptures, and most favorable to the extension of individual privilege. But in ancient times this was not the *sole* method. The singing was often responsive. In the primitive churches there were also *solo* exercises. Paul does not condemn these, but merely complains that they were too numerous and irregular. *Every man* had his particular psalm, all of whom could not be accommodated. The argument drawn from Scripture precedent, therefore, must not be pressed too far. We may add, also, that the extent of privilege in this method has its limits. Those who will not learn to sing or who, having learned, relinquish all practice in music,

social, and private, have certainly no right to disturb the worshipers around them, by their harsh utterances. There are many of this class, particularly in city congregations. And how they can esteem it a privilege to make such doleful noises in the congregation, as they are wont to do, is more than we can understand.

The method of employing a quartette to lead and sustain the voices of the assembly, possesses some advantages over the one we are considering, inasmuch as four voices are stronger than one. These voices, however, must be marvelous in power, if they can harmonize duly with each other, exercise a full control of the assembly, and prevent the latter from deteriorating through neglect of practice.

The more usual design of a quartette, is to produce finer music than could otherwise be obtained; and that for the gratification of a silent auditory. If the performers are animated by the spirit of intelligent Christian piety, they may so sing, perhaps, as to give permanent satisfaction, when this method is greatly preferred. But if they are of a different spirit, and are influenced

A volunteer Choir.

chiefly by inferior considerations, their performances, morally speaking, will be mere sabbath concerts for the gratification of taste—mere profanation of praise.

The method of conducting praise by a volunteer choir may be so pursued as to secure every advantage that can reasonably be desired. Let Christians take the lead in this enterprise, and give it the right direction. Let the numbers be abundant, and be well trained. Then, if it should be desirable, there can be occasional *solo* utterances, relieved and beautified by the contrasts of a full choir. Let the choir consist of persons of influence, who will effectually sympathize with the congregation. Let them attend the evening lecture, acting there as a choir in reality, though not in form, leading the other voices in some well-known tunes; and let them afterwards occasionally sing at church, the same humble strains of the lecture-room, with the express understanding, that the congregation are then to unite in general chorus. Such an arrangement has been tried, and found successful. It is no longer an experiment. It has in it all the elements of durability.

A volunteer Choir.

All of its features may be considered essential. If Christian influence is withholden, the spirit of praise will be wanting. If the numbers are too few, they will not succeed in controlling the voices of the assembly. If they are not well trained, they will sing with too little expression, and fail to give light and shade to the various sentiments they utter. Above all, if there is a want of sympathy between the choir and the worshipers below, the latter will derive little benefit from the privilege of occasionally uniting in the general chorus. This privilege is essential. For unless the congregation bear some active part in the exercises, they will be less interested in them; and they will lose the advantage of that social principle, which enters so largely into the nature of public worship.

The writer of these pages, having been employed full half a century in this field of effort and observation, may claim the right to speak with confidence on this subject. He has too often tried the plan he here recommends, not to know, by happy experience, that what he affirms concerning it, is abundantly true. Let choirs be

formed on any other than a Christian basis, and he has nothing to say on their behalf. He will not consent to answer for their good conduct, their unanimity or stability. They can not fully succeed. We ought not to expect it. We ought, as Christians, to know better than to confide any department of religious worship to the sole guidance of æsthetic influences. It is an abuse of hallowed things. Modern precedent, however respectable we may deem it, can not be pleaded against the plain precepts and examples of Scripture. Those who willingly and intelligently favor such an abuse must answer it to the Master of Assemblies, whose cause they have dishonored. Christians should look with devout solicitude to the character of praise, as well as to that of preaching or prayer.

But what shall be said of instrumental music in this connection? Its use is fully sanctioned by the word of God; yet, like other good things, it is liable in many ways to be abused. The sound application of Christian principles to this department in worship is destined, no doubt, to effect important changes. Instruments will then

come, as of old, to occupy an humble place, chiefly as accessories to the human voice. They will not then be allowed to embarrass its utterances, or to attract toward themselves that measure of attention which is due to the sublime and solemn themes of praise. Much less will they be made objects of splendid attraction to draw an admiring auditory. But upon this subject we need not dwell. Common sense and Christian experience will ultimately suggest the needed improvements.

CHAPTER VIII.

INFLUENCE AND CO-OPERATION OF PASTORS.

This is indispensable to success—Many considerations show this—The aid usually withholden—Reasons examined—Objections obviated—*Musical* talent not here indispensable—Without its advantages, he can consult the Scriptures, and bring forth their various teachings—These as important to praise as to prayer—Not right to neglect them—Old Testament precepts, examples and inferences considered—The New Testament no less decided in its teachings—Precepts—Examples—Inferences—No want of materials for the pastor's use—The subject should be kept before the people—Suggestions as to modes of presentation—Secularizing notions, habits, and influences to be counteracted—The present a favorable time—Concerts and conventions will not do the pastor's work—He must act, or other efforts will fail.

From what has been hitherto said of reform in church music, it will follow that pastors of churches, whether they sing or not, have an important part to act in this matter. We wish here to say nothing inconsistent with that respect which is due to the sacred office. The duties of that office are, for the most part, so plain and so clearly revealed, as not to require the aid of any lay interpreter. And yet, it would not be very wonderful if the discussion before us should reveal to the notice of pastors an important field of duty which, unhappily, has been but little occupied.

Pastors must act.

The subject of church music has been so long associated with artistic considerations as to render it difficult to break the entanglement. But this very thing *must be done*. And who will undertake it while the pulpit maintains its accustomed silence? The offices of praise and prayer have been instituted by the same authority. The Lawgiver has not *told us* that the one is less important than the other. If the subject of prayer had been so unhappily combined with the claims of oratory as to prevent in great measure the fervor and the efficacy of addresses at the throne of grace, this very fact would inevitably call forth the teachings and admonitions of the pulpit. The clearest statements would be made, and the most careful discrimination be drawn. Arguments and motives would be brought to bear upon the subject: and there would be line upon line, and precept upon precept, till the people were enlightened and reclaimed.

Now when we ask that the same measure of faithfulness for a similar reason, may be exerted in reference to the office of praise, do we ask any thing unreasonable? Could we ask any thing

less? The two cases are substantially alike. They both involve the same moral question; and who has told us that the mockery of praise is less displeasing in the sight of God, than the emptiness of lip-service in prayer! The difficulties in which the subject is involved are neither intangible nor hopeless. They do not alter the truths of the Bible, and they form no impediment to spiritual interpretation. The circumstance that praise is to be sung instead of being simply spoken, does not change at all the spiritual nature of the exercise. Singing, in a moral point of view, as we have shown, is but another kind of verbal utterance, a more elevated method of speech, which should form as true an index of the "thoughts and intents of the heart," as that which is demanded in social prayer.

The pastor without any practical acquaintance with music, can understand this principle and present it before his people, and he can discover the heartlessness and formality and self-ignorance and presumption which prevail, as well as the earnestness, sincerity, and spirituality which are sometimes manifested. Waiving the authority

of human traditions and making the Bible his stand-point, the course before him would seem to be as clear and as well defined as in regard to any other point of doctrine or duty.

But many a plausible theory, we shall be told, proves of little value when the experiment is made of reducing it to practice. Unforeseen obstacles arise, and unexpected difficulties occur, for the removal of which there is no existing provision. This is very true. It should be borne in mind, however, that the theory which we offer is one which presents no real novelties. It is a theory which has been fully tested, and one which, in its principal features, has a thousand times been reduced to practice with happy success. It is also the only one which is thoroughly in accordance with the teachings of the Scriptures.

We shall be told, perhaps, that laymen do not understand the peculiar embarrassments under which a pastor is called to labor. So many things invite his attention at once, that he is obliged to make his own selection. The citadel of the adversary can not be attacked single-handed at all points simultaneously. Some will be more vul-

nerable than others, and promise a richer and more speedy return of benefits. And who shall dictate to a pastor, at any given time, how his selection shall be made? True, very true. But the proposition before us is not one of *time;* though if it were so, one would suppose that the delay of half a century, on a point of attack which is so vulnerable, might more than suffice. What we affirm, is simply that reform in the office of praise can not be achieved without the active, well-directed efforts of a pastor; and in this position we expect to be sustained.

We have seen that prayerful consideration should precede every attempt at reform. And shall not the pastor take the *lead* in this matter? Does it not appertain to his office? Who else, if the pastor does not do it, will presume to call the people of his charge to solemn reflection and prayer in reference to abuses in the worship of God? We have seen that Christians who are influential, intelligent, and spiritual, must put their hand to this enterprise. How shall this be done, if their constituted leader in spiritual things remains silent and inactive? We have seen that

efforts must be based upon the teachings of the Bible. Who but the pastor can bring these effectually to bear upon the people, and secure for them, through the Divine blessing, an abiding influence? We have seen that the character of schools and rehearsals must be essentially improved. Who will cast the salt of religious influence into those fountains, if the pastor perseveres in neglecting them? And how shall the right instruction of children in church music be secured; and how shall selections of tunes be regulated, if the pastor will have nothing to say or do regarding these interests? The slightest reference to such topics as these, will more than suffice to show that reform is in the nature of things impracticable, unless the pastor engages in it. The effort has often been made by individuals and churches, but never with permanent success, it is believed, where a pastor's influence has been withholden. Art may gain its purposes without him, yet not in this connection, without trespassing upon the claims of spirituality. The true spirit of praise will no sooner exist without culture, than will the spirit of believing supplication.

Both of these are necessary to acceptable worship; and both are worthy of pastoral effort and solicitude.

But we shall be told that great difficulties may arise from a pastor's interference with the singing. Some of the fathers in the ministry have enjoined it upon their younger brethren to "have nothing to do with the singing," lest it should endanger their influence, and involve them in troubles and contentions.

Now that very serious difficulties have often arisen in this connection, no one will presume to deny; and that pastors have *sometimes* acted wisely in standing aloof from them, for a season, is equally obvious. But what has been the origin of such difficulties? Doubtless they may all be traced to the wide prevalence of wrong principles. Were we to imagine, for example, that elocution is the chief desideratum in preaching, and in public and social prayer, and that those who acquire the greatest skill in that art, are the very fittest persons to officiate in such exercises, we would soon involve ourselves in inextricable difficulties. Sustaining choirs on a simi-

lar principle, and then treating them with alternate neglect and severity, may well occasion trouble. It has often done so, and the end is not yet. The troubles are destined to increase, till right principles prevail; and for the inculcation of these, we must look to the influence of the pulpit.

If there really were any thing in music, which could lessen obligations to *sincerity* in exercises of praise: if, as some would have us suppose, there is in music itself, a semi-Divine efficiency, which might go far toward securing right influences independently of right intentions in the singers, we might find it more difficult to show that the much honored clergy who neglect this entire subject, are not occupying a tenable position: and probably it was some prevailing notion of the sort which led them to assume this position. But there is no such efficiency, as has been pretended. The idea is erroneous. It is absurd. It should be driven from Christian society, and banished to the shades of modern infidelity, where it appropriately belongs. There is not the slightest foundation for it to rest upon. For every purpose of

Discussed.

moral discussion, religious music may be regarded as a species of consentaneous oratory, so ordered that numbers may unite harmoniously, in the same sounds, giving emotional utterance to the great themes of the gospel. Mere music, it is true, has the power to *please*, independently of verbal utterance. It is, therefore, used in voluntaries and symphonies, in preparation for that which is better. But in religious worship, it is of secondary import. The case being thus, the moral bearings of the subject are seen at a glance; and it requires no uncommon wisdom, or practical knowledge in music, to bring them before the community.

There is, however, another objection, which deserves to be considered, as it often exerts much influence on the decisions of a pastor, in relation to this subject. Sacred music has formed no regular department in theological education. The subject of praise has been treated chiefly in the abstract. The teachings of the Bible on this subject are not diffuse: and where is the pastor to obtain the necessary materials for such a course of instruction as he might wish to pursue?

In reply to this objection, we would say that it has, in part, been the object of this appeal to supply the necessary materials. We have endeavored to present a suggestive train of thought, which may bear expansion. The topics have not been exhausted; and the mere enumeration will naturally bring others to mind. But let us spend a moment upon the more direct contemplation of these materials.

The office of praise, as beheld in the Scriptures, furnishes abundant matter for thought and investigation. The nature of praise, as we have seen, needs to be carefully explained, according to the Scriptures, and to be kept prominently before the mind of the worshipers. And this is the more necessary, because of the wide prevalence of theoretical and practical errors in relation to it. Apostolic instructions to this end, though very brief, are explicit, and directly in point. They are easily explained and illustrated, as we have seen, and there is scarce a possibility of misinterpretation. They accord at once with the spiritual nature of our religion, with the pure and exalted nature of the themes of song, and with the many

instructive examples of praise contained in the blessed volume.

It should be kept before the mind of the worshipers, that in praise just as in prayer, God looketh upon the heart.* The themes of praise are various. Some of them are meditations, or narrations, or descriptions, or addresses to saints or sinners. Yet they are all intended to be uttered forth in the immediate presence of the Searcher of Hearts; and whether the utterance is directed to God, or whether it is addressed to our own souls or the souls of others, the requirement is all the same. We are to worship in spirit and in truth. Yet many of the themes of religious song, are more lofty, more hallowed, and more momentous than the language we ordinarily employ in public or social prayer. What noble specimens are contained in the book of Psalms, in the prophecies of Isaiah, and in the book of Revelations. What preparation of heart, what commitment of soul they require! The very utterances of heaven have come down to us, that we

* This truth will be best appreciated, when Christians *act* as if they believed it.

may catch something of their spirit, and send back our hallowed, though feeble responses. While such themes as these form the subject of pulpit discourse or exhortation, how easy it would be to draw instructive inferences in regard to the duty or the privilege of praise; or to inquire whether we are not liable in many ways, to injure such language in our songs; or to point out some of the obvious hindrances to devotional enjoyment in this connection; or to show how urgent is the necessity of schooling our hearts, in reference to utterances in religious song. A few hints at a time, suggested by the use of such themes in sermonising, would serve to make salutary and durable impressions. Or take the Psalmist's multiplied and earnest exhortations to praise, enforced as they are by apostolical authority. Shall we look upon these as mere poetic exclamations? Or shall we regard them as urging us to the faithful discharge of an important duty, and the enjoyment of a precious privilege? The Scriptures abound with such sources of instruction as these; and doubtless they will prove amply suggestive.

Its Examples.

Nor are Scripture *examples* of praise less remarkable or suggestive. The song of gratitude at the Red Sea was not an old one, rendered venerable by time-honored associations, but a new one in all its freshness of interest, adapted to the special occasion. The people were not then engaged as mere amateurs in musical practice or in æsthetic personations. They just spoke forth in impressive language their gratitude for deliverance, when "the horse and his rider had been thrown into the sea!" They meant to be understood as speaking in good earnest their own sentiments and feelings. Many of the most precious of the inspired Psalms had a similar origin, referring to some particular event or occasion. The worshipers were not formalists or amateurs. They were not in the habit of using old or new pieces exclusively: they seem to have employed to some extent the talent of every generation in the production of new ones. Witness also the ark on its way to the city of David. Who were leaders in praise on this occasion? Children and youth, with a few uninfluential members in society? No! The consecrated Levites and priests stood fore-

most, with the king at their head. What a dignity and importance was thus given to the exercise! This was right. When God is to be honored, we should do our *utmost* in the celebration of His praise. A fellow-worm, when receiving public honor, would not be satisfied with the testimony of a few unimportant voices. "Offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" We are all wrong in this matter. God is to be either honored or dishonored in the offerings of praise. If the former, then let us have the best talent and influence which the church can possibly command. In the case before us, the man after God's own heart felt it his privilege to take a most active part in the song. Though a king, he was not afraid of such conspicuity. He acted nobly; and his example was recorded for the instruction of subsequent generations. There was a lofty-minded one, however, who felt scandalized at the *undignified* deportment of the king. "How glorious was the king of Israel," said she, sneeringly, after she beheld the train. And how many an earthly-minded one of the present day might be fear-

fully rebuked by a reference to this example.

Still greater interest was attached to exercises in praise at the dedication of the first temple. The glorious symbol of the Divine presence was not given when the ark was deposited in the holy of holies, but at the glad moment when the song arose, "For his mercy endureth forever." Then it was that the "glory of the Lord filled the house," and shone so transcendently that even "the priests could not stand to minister." This is not to be regarded merely as a part of the splendid ceremonies of a typical dispensation: there is a moral lesson in it as distinct and significant as that which attends the dedicatory prayer. The words of that song have come down to us with a greater amplitude of meaning under the gospel dispensation: and shall we now, by a negligent or by an æsthetic treatment, virtually reduce them to commonplace? Is it right to neutralize the influence of themes and sentiments which have been so honored by the God of Israel? Religious song is destined to have its fullest significance in days of gospel privilege, and to be-

come a livelier and more impressive type of the worship of the redeemed in heaven.

The *New* Testament is not without its examples. The choir of angels at the Nativity were not Jews engaged in typical representations. The closing exercise at the institution of the Lord's Supper was not, at that solemn moment, a mere æsthetic one, or one distinguished for dullness or formality. Paul and Silas, in the depths of a dismal dungeon, with their backs unwashed from the scourgings of persecution, were not engaged in mere musical practice or in giving a soiree, when the quaking earth so miraculously responded to their strains. And in the visions of the Apocalypse none seem to have borne a more animated and conspicuous part in the songs of heavenly joy than those who had learned the "new song" of redeeming love.

Such examples are numerous and suggestive. Behold in the Bible, their influence seems quite irresistible. But when we compare them with the maxims, and details, and influences of modern times, the temptation is to reconsider, to relinquish our convictions of the truth, to consult the

Not to be disregarded.

traditions of men, and to listen to empty declamations on musical efficiency: and then, to become skeptical about such pretensions, to confess ignorance, and to conclude that the spirit of praise is never again to be revived. But all this is wrong. To the law and to the testimony. Let God be true, though every man were to prove a liar. Most solemn and impressive are the teachings of the Scriptures in regard to praise; and the time is coming when these teachings will be appreciated, and when songs of holy joy will be heard "from the uttermost parts of the earth."

By the brief selection of Scripture materials here presented, it is easy to perceive that the blessed volume is not deficient in its teachings upon the subject before us. How to divide the word rightly, to bring forth treasures new and old, and to give to each a portion in due season, is doubtless a matter which calls for study and reflection; and it is worthy of being thus entertained. The subject must in various ways be kept before the mind of the people, till wrong principles and arrangements concerning it are banished from the churches, and right views and

purposes are fully restored. Give to music, as an art, its due consideration. Encourage it. Deny it not any of its masterly achievements. Exercise liberality toward its admirers and cultivators. Indulge no evil surmisings against it. But when it comes into the church with mistaken pretensions, confounding æsthetics with spiritualities, let the mistake be detected, and exposed and censured, if need be, till its blinding, and chilling, and deadening influences shall be withdrawn and counteracted.

Here is the place to begin. Just here the subject labors, and will continue to labor, till the much loved and honored clergy will be convinced that they have solemn instructions to give, which have been too long withholden. Nor is the Bible deficient in its teachings, as to this very point. Notwithstanding the wonderful displays at the dedication of the temple, there, unhappily, came a period in the history of Solomon, when he "*got to himself* men-singers and women-singers, and musical instruments of all sorts, so delightsome to the sons of men." He became an amateur, it would seem, where he should have been a wor-

shiper. Æsthetics invaded the province of spiritualities. No wonder he was led to cry out "Vanity of vanities—all is vanity and vexation of spirit." But this was not his only mistake. He became, it appears, *too exclusively* addicted to music as an *art*. This, of course, would lead to fastidiousness, to disappointment and satiety. The art was given to us for better purposes than those of amusement or ostentation. Solomon has in this respect, we fear, many imitators among Christian professors of the present day. They need not wonder that their fondness for art, to the neglect of devotional singing, is rewarded with barrenness of spiritual enjoyment. The king, too, might have imagined for a time that there was a divinity in art, which might be worshiped.

Again we say, it is just here that the subject labors. Efforts are too exclusively put forth at the present time, for the increase of music as an art. Schools, and concerts, and conventions, and lectures, are doing much which is commendable. But is the evil, to which we refer, at all lessened by the wonderful increase of effort and of zeal? We think not. We think it is increasing, and

that it will continue to increase till teachings from the desk, to which we have referred, are brought fully to bear upon the public mind. The gratification of taste, to some extent, as we have seen, legitimately combines itself with devout utterances of praise. But if, in our artistic ardor, we seize upon the one to the neglect of the other, we are, doubtless, preparing in all haste to make shipwreck of devotional interests. The few faint exhortations, which are heard in schools, in concerts, and conventions, will be easily drowned in the overflowings of musical harmony. The pulpit must speak, or other appeals will be powerless. It should speak ere the present season for strong impressions shall have passed away. Now while artistic improvements of every character are jointly promoted, amid the joyous greetings at concerts and conventions, the danger is that moral and religious distinctions, which are vital to the interests of devotional music, will more than ever be lost sight of and forgotten. The presence of clergymen, on these occasions, will not prevent such an issue. The tendencies are strong, and irresistible by such appliances. The people at

Properly Combined.

large must be enlightened; and the pulpit, hitherto neglectful of this topic, must speak forth in its scriptural teachings and admonitions, if the threatening evil is to be averted. Something can be effected by private exertions; but these alone will not suffice.

CHAPTER IX.

PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES.

How these are to be obviated—Those of the least magnitude occur in various fields—Among heathen converts—Among the slave population—In new settlements—In settlements more densely populated—Among jealousies and contentions—When the leading talent is out of the church.

HAVING shown the principal causes of declension in praise, and pointed out the means of restoring the appropriate characteristics and influences; it remains for us to give our remarks a more practical bearing. To have shown that certain things ought to be done, and by what means they might generally be accomplished, will not suffice for all the purposes of this appeal. The actors will often be placed in such circumstances, as not to perceive exactly how they should commence operations. Let us then contemplate some of the fields of effort, and see what light can be thrown upon them. We begin where little is to be done, and pass to fields which are more perplexing.

1st. Missionaries to an unlettered people have often been in a dilemma—obliged to set Christian hymns, either to native melodies, stained with impure associations, or to set them to the melodies of a civilized land, which, for a time, would be neither appreciated nor enjoyed. The latter method, we believe, has been usually pursued, and with good reason. Yet, were it not for bad associations, the native melodies would, for a time, be preferable. Taste must be formed gradually. A marked distinction should here, as well as in every other field, be preserved between the exercises of drilling and devotion. This requires great care.

2d. Among the slaves at the South, little at present can be done toward improving the *manner* of praise except by oral examples. Simple, outspeaking melodies, with pure associations, and which readily admit of an emotional utterance of words, should here be cultivated. The hymns, however, should not be so much used in mere practice as to destroy their freshness or lessen their interest. Some hackneyed stanza or some

one of the music-syllables would be best for practical purposes.

3d. In new settlements, where the population is scattered, and where few musical advantages are enjoyed, little can be done in the first instance but to lay a good foundation for future improvement. A full, distinct, earnest, vocal delivery should be secured in connection with tunes already familiar. Some of these will be offensive to good taste, but better ones can be gradually substituted in their place. Vulgarities on the one hand, and extreme refinements on the other, should be equally avoided as unfavorable to devotion. A pastor's services would here be very beneficial, especially as the earliest teachers in such places are usually superficial. A little drilling upon vowels will improve the tone of voice, and practice upon consonants will improve the articulation. Accent, emphasis, momentary pauses, management of the breath, and other things which relate to vocal delivery, can be inculcated gradually, in a simple way, as far as opportunity allows. To this end a pastor need pos-

sess very little knowledge of music.* Great care, however, must be exercised in the government of thoughts, and feelings, and purposes, in regard to exercises of praise even in times of practice, if the spirit of praise is to be promoted. Practice should, in this respect, correspond with theory. The danger is, that the nicer points in style will occupy too much the attention of the worshipers.

4th. In older settlements, even, where the population is comparatively dense, the singing is often very poor. Teachers are deficient, and schools are infrequent and disorderly. The general notion that "*music* is a good thing for society, and an *important part of the worship*," is not accompanied with an abiding conviction of duty or obligation. Untold abuses prevail at rehearsals and at church, while the performances of the choir are apparently as unmeaning and heartless as the mummeries of a heathen temple. This is no picture of the fancy, but one which is often seen as a living reality.

But since all parties are in fault, as well as greatly deficient in information, the pastor's course

* Such knowledge would greatly add to his usefulness

is a plain one. He can pursue his Scriptural presentations of the subject without appearing invidious. His first object should be, not to descant upon abuses, but to awaken in the church a true and abiding sense of her responsibility. He can at the same time do much toward this result by making frequent calls at the practice-room, leaving there a pleasing yet hallowed influence; and he can do much by his deportment in the pulpit during exercises of praise. The choir, having sinned ignorantly, should not be denounced as public offenders; nor should the first attack be made upon ignorant and unprincipled teachers who sometimes infest such places. Christians have been remiss. Let them ingenuously acknowledge their fault, and so qualify themselves to become leaders, that others will consent to follow them.

5th. The same general course should be pursued where divisions in sentiment and practice prevail, or where jealousies, contentions, and animosities abound. Such things could not exist if *one party only* were in fault. Ignorance of responsibility, as well as dereliction of principle, lies

at the foundation of the difficulties. The pastor need not become a partisan. In the course of his instructions he can say to all, as an apostle did to the Corinthians, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Where all parties are in fault, and where the church takes its full share of the blame, difficulties may gradually be obviated. The prevalence of Christian principle, of Christian feeling, and of Christian activity, will produce a wonderful influence. People who have been religiously educated will feel the power of such an influence. What would they think of such contentions as they are witnessing, if these had reference to the promotion of prayer-meetings? Such a question timely presented would not be lost upon them. Much patience may be required before instructions from the pulpit will produce their desired effect. They must be presented in affectionate meekness, "line upon line, precept upon precept: here a little, and there a little," till prejudice can be gradually undermined and truth be made apparent. One thing is certain. Let people duly cultivate the *spirit* of

praise, and they will not quarrel about the *manner* of it.

6th. Is it not a shame that churches, by their own neglect, are so often driven to seek "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" to LEAD them in the songs of salvation? This, surely, is a sad incongruity. If music alone could build up the spiritualities of the sanctuary just as brick and mortar has built the walls of it, the plan might answer. But as it has no such power, the practice is inconsistent. There could be no necessity for it, if Christians would do their duty. The remark applies to instruments as well as to voices. In neither case can the *control* of the exercises proceed from merely æsthetic agencies without compromiting the interests of devotion. We speak *plainly* on this subject; yet we speak fearlessly, for our language is in accordance with the teachings of inspiration and the dictates of enlightened experience. If such a measure has for a time been needed, let the church awake to the true remedy. There is no *necessary* deficiency of talent among its members. It should be drawn forth and matured by culture. Churches

Should be Superseded.

should act upon this subject. What if pastors were to tell them so? Possibly non-professors might demur. Then let instruction begin further back, and show from the Scriptures the paramount importance of spiritual qualifications in those who give character to the songs of the sanctuary.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SECTION I.

Greater difficulties—Strong prejudices against innovation—Origin of these—Not to be wantonly violated—May be gradually undermined—Certain methods successful.

A LARGE class of churches, owing to some former prevalence of artistic abuses, have become extremely prejudiced against innovations in the way of improvement. No very important change has taken place for some centuries past. The hymns in many cases are quite destitute of lyric character, while the tunes are so inappropriate to the sentiments of the language, and so miserably sung, as to neutralize the tendencies to devotion. The people, however, long accustomed to these rude utterances, derive some pleasure from them, and persist in maintaining them. Few fields of labor are so difficult as these. Yet even here something may in time be effected. By the ju-

Prejudices.

dicious, patient, graphic exhibitions of truth, the prejudices may be gradually undermined. Reference should be had to the precepts and examples of Scripture. Comparisons should be drawn between exercises in praise and prayer. These would serve to show up the abuses in their proper light. A mere reference to the habits and to the general appearance of the assembly would suffice to show that, comparatively speaking, "the glory has departed." And when the church are in some measure awake to the subject, a few meetings can be held for general improvement. Something then can be done in the way of practice. The leading principles of good vocal delivery, if prudently presented, will commend themselves to the good sense of the people. Some better notions, too, of tune, of time, and of melody, may be advantageously given, all duly subordinated to the spirit of praise. A few good, spiritually-minded singers may on these occasions be so seated in the assembly as to act informally and incidentally like a controlling choir. The advantages of this measure would soon be manifest. Taste would begin to improve, and devotion to

increase. The increase of spiritual enjoyment would weaken the bonds of prejudice, till in time the measure might be perpetuated. Other improvements might follow in a similar manner.

Such congregations are usually influenced by the examples of the reformers of the sixteenth century. But those reformers availed themselves of the best hymns, which their own times produced, and set them to such spirit-stirring melodies, old and new, as could be appreciated and remembered with delight. These were sung in families as well as in public. They had great influence with the people; and whole villages would become vocal with the praises of God. Would it not be advisable for us, now these three centuries later, as descendants of the reformers, to follow the *spirit* of their example, rather than to copy their *identical utterances*, which have become too antiquated and time-worn, to produce their former influence.* So thought a late excellent pastor of a Cameronian church, when without any book

* Originally they were *felt* to be music and poetry. They were sung with energy, and not in the present drawling manner.

in hand, he would often give out the lines of some of the sweetest hymns of the language. This gradually prepared the way for further improvements. Other experiments of an analogous character, might often be attended with similar success. Yet they should not be pressed too far, nor seem to be of an aggressive character. They should be such as would commend themselves to the good sense and good feeling of the worshipers, and contribute to their spiritual enjoyment. A course less gradual and conciliatory, would lead to a painful reaction in favor of old habits.

SECTION II.

Difficulties where there has been much training upon elements of notation—No instructions of an æsthetic or devotional character—The latter to be supplied—Hints regarding the process.

We pass now to a field where there is much cultivation of a limited kind. Considerable industry has been bestowed upon the *elementary* branches of the art. Schools have been well attended, and orderly, and the pupils, so far as psalmody is concerned, have become versed in

notation. There is manifested some stability and unanimity of purpose, and some fondness for musical practice: yet there is little discrimination in matters of taste, and still less as to devotional influences. The congregation seem to be indifferent to the performances.

This description will apply, with little variation, to thousands of churches. But in the multitude of cases, the training has been too exclusively mechanical. If taste is to be cultivated, the mind must be allowed occasionally to dwell in the practice-room upon *objects* of taste; and if right habits of piety are to be formed in this connection, the mind must have its corresponding seasons of uninterrupted religious meditation. This principle in training, as we have seen, is everywhere indispensable. But unfortunately it is disregarded. The mind is occupied so exclusively with rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic elements, and with sounds, syllables, accents, &c., independently of the meaning and spirit of the language, that groveling tendencies become habitual. It occupies itself as exclusively with such matters, as if they alone were essential.

Many who are dissatisfied with such unmeaning mechanism, are not at all aware of the cause which produces it. "Some people," they tell us, "will never acquire taste. What is the use of reasoning about such matters? Men who are so governed by habit and prejudice, will have their own notions, and abide by them." Such a style of remark may answer in relation to secular music, where taste often runs into extravagances, or refines into fastidiousness; but it has no proper bearing upon the case before us. These people have such an exclusive fondness for mechanism, simply because nothing better has been taught them. Their minds have been misguided, in regard to taste and devotion, by erroneous teaching. How is taste or devotion to be promoted in the practice of church music, while the mind is constantly preoccupied by minor considerations! The day of miracles is past.

Right minded people, who have ordinary susceptibility, will easily cultivate a taste for simple music, when the opportunity is given them; and with the Divine blessing, they will become devout, if the proper means are used. If the teacher is

deficient or diffident of his ability in these respects, how easy will it be for the pastor to assist him? Even if the latter knows little of practical music, he understands language, and sentiment, and devotion, and the philosophy of the human mind. Let him occasionally occupy the school for a brief moment, with æsthetic considerations, drawn from the characteristics of some hymn, and the singers will begin to acquire taste. Let him do a similar office in regard to the religious sentiments of a hymn, and he will be likely to do something for the promotion of a spirit of praise. Very brief instructions of the sort, often repeated, are usually found to have a happy and abiding influence. Habits of attention are thus induced, in favor of taste and spirituality. A remedy so easily applied, and so efficient, ought not to be withholden. Even if the teacher is talented and faithful, he will be happy to receive this aid from the pastor. Such visits have often been blessed. An occasional word of tenderness, in such circumstances, often gains a lodgement in some heart, which had resisted the more ordinary presentations of truth.

SECTION III.

Difficulties where æsthetic considerations have undue influence—Characteristics—Self-ignorance—The proper test—The remedy.

There is another field of labor, which from the general progress of musical knowledge and refinement, is becoming more and more perplexing. We refer to congregations where æsthetical influences have gained the entire ascendency. Good people do not always know themselves in this respect. Mere pleasures of taste sometimes pass with them for better influences. This is especially true with those whose training has been artistic. They can go for amusement to a sacred concert, or to an oratorio, be delighted with the exhibitions of skill, be melted by the sweet touches of pathos, and be animated by the impressions of moral courage and sublimity, precisely as if they were at the opera. But since the subject is religious, and since their minds are so pleasantly exercised in that connection, they are tempted to regard these pleasures in the light of spiritual influences. They are also apt to reason from such experiences, in favor of mere musical efficiency.

If while their chief object is amusement, they are so *religiously* affected, how powerful must the art be, and how much more might be expected from it at church, while the object is religious! Church music, of a simpler kind, has no attractions for them. It is too unpretending. It does not present that special kind of appeal to which they are accustomed. Yet if the music at church, as sometimes happens in city congregations, becomes sufficiently artistic to meet their demands, they sit as irresponsible listeners, to be wrought upon by æsthetic agencies, estimating the music according to its power over their sensibilities.

That such persons are *wholly* destitute of right feelings, we do not presume to say. Probably not. The Christian, in certain favored seasons, will find his thoughts tending upward, when there is much around him that would "chain him down to sense." At such times, every thing which is beautiful in nature or art, may serve to remind him of the goodness of God. Perhaps, too, the sin of ignorance is so "winked at," by Divine forbearance and condescension, in such cases, that individuals are more benefited than any one would

suppose them to be. In some instances the fact would appear to be so; and hence the difficulty of convincing such persons that they are habitually in error. If such a thing is attempted directly, they refer to conscious experience. Question the "*heavenly* influence" of fine music, and you reveal your own want of susceptibility. The anxious pastor is in a painful dilemma. He sees plainly that such persons are ensnared, but perceives no practical mode of disentanglement. The evil is increasing, but what can he do? Shall he quote the decisions of a Newton, a Cecil, and a Richmond against the influences of splendid concerts and oratorios? Those good men, perhaps, were not sufficiently liberal-minded. Shall he speak against excessive indulgence in music? But how is one to know *what is* excessive, if he himself is a neglecter of the art?

But, happily, there are two or three considerations which serve to throw light upon such æsthetic influences. The first is that, for the most part, they are exceedingly transient, terminating almost with the strains that produce them, and leading off the mind from the subject-matter of the

song, to considerations of musical skill. The second is, that they are not usually accompanied with evident fruits of spirituality. Those who have the most of this enjoyment, often seem to make but little progress in the Divine life—a very suspicious circumstance truly. The third is, that such influences are not confined to Christians, but are equally operative upon unconverted men—a circumstance still more suspicious. These considerations are neither trivial nor inconclusive. They are of solemn moment, and are not easily set aside.

Some persons, on witnessing the unsatisfactory nature of such influences, grow skeptical as to the utility of religious music. But they reason from the abuses of it, rather than from any personal discovery of its proper effects. Real worship in religious song, is not the mere passive experience of emotions that come and go at the bidding of an earthly minstrel. It implies voluntary intelligent activity of the mind, in relation to Divine things. It claims the high purposes of the soul, and confers happiness incidentally in connection with the discharge of duty. But, if in place of this volun-

tariness, this activity of purpose, we are indolently waiting to be acted upon, just as the "harp of the winds" may be influenced by the passing breeze, we have no right to expect a blessing from the exercises; nor need we wonder if they should prove a snare to us. We may have pleasures in this relation, which are more in keeping with the concert-room than with the house of God.

Morally speaking, the case before us has its exact counterpart in pulpit oratory. While listening to an excellent discourse, we are sometimes more influenced by the manner of the speaker, than by the real import of his message. Our fondness for oratory has proved a snare. This is a common case, and one which all can understand. If we have been listening to the discourse, chiefly on account of the exhibition of talent, we usually find our reward in the fleeting sentimentalities of the occasion. It is only when the mind is in sympathy *with the object* of the speaker, that we are in the proper attitude for receiving spiritual benefit as worshipers.

A principle, so obvious as this, may serve for every purpose of illustration. Let the amateur

listeners assume the responsibility of real active worshipers. Let them, with the hymn in hand, personally plead, confess, give thanks, and adore, with the mind as intently fixed on Divine things, as if they were orally engaged in earnest prayer. Let them persevere in doing this from Sabbath to Sabbath, till they can realize in some measure the power of a new habit, and they will find themselves, for the most part, blessed with influences very different from those we have been describing; influences of a precious, permanent, and substantial nature. Æsthetic influences, too, though greatly chastened and modified, will then be all the sweeter for being kept in due subordination.

SECTION IV.

Difficulties occasioned by strong combinations of secular interests with the music of the church—The *spirit* of praise, not thus promoted—Remedy—Teachings of the Scriptures—Pastoral aid indispensable.

Secular interests often extensively combine in efforts for the promotion of church music, particularly in respect to *skill*. Teachers are emulous

Become Prominent.

of distinction, and desirous of patronage. Authors and publishers wish to increase the sale of their productions. Builders and venders of musical instruments desire to augment the number of purchasers. Trustees of churches wish to secure the many incidental advantages which arise from "good singing;" and choirs love to vie with each other in attainments of practical skill. Hence there must be "great gatherings." This is a matter of course. Good men must lend their co-operation, and society at large must show hospitality, and patronize the concerts of the convention, in the hope of promoting the interests of church music. Secular music, however, must come in for its full share of attention, and find its way, perhaps, in concerts of a mixed, incongruous character, embracing songs of every grade, from the refined sentimental to the low comic, and possibly, to the coarsest burlesque. The resident pastor is expected to be present, and favor the enterprise. Now as most of the interests involved are right in themselves considered, what is he to do? Good men are there. Even the leaders, perhaps, are professors of religion, desir-

ous on the whole for the promotion of the right spirit. All is not as they could wish. But they must enjoy themselves, and please the people; and to this end must cater to every kind of musical taste and appetite. Shall he stand aloof, and draw upon himself the charge of indifference and illiberality? Or shall he join the coalition, and crave the Divine blessing upon all its purposes and transactions. This is sometimes a difficult question, and probably the answer should not always be the same. Such gatherings may be useful in many respects. If they are sometimes worse ordered than we have here represented, they at other times have a better appearance, and are attended with better results. In the latter case, the pastor has often been delighted, and filled with encouragement. And his hopes have not *always* been disappointed.

A single question, however, will serve to throw light upon the moral of such conventions. Are these people, in the furtherance of psalmody, agreeably to the Saviour's rule seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, with the expectation that secular advantages will incident-

ally accrue? Or are they, in reversing that rule, seeking first and chiefly their own secular interests with the idea that praise will be incidentally promoted? The hope of promoting the worship of God in any department, by the power of secular interests, is wholly delusory. Taste, and knowledge, and skill, and perseverance may be so promoted, perhaps, but not the spirit of true devotion, whether in praise or prayer. We might as soon expect to revive the piety of a church by lyceum lectures, or awaken a spirit of prayer by ornamenting a steeple or setting out shade-trees. Conventions and concerts of the ordinary kind, may be so conducted as to secure many advantages: but deliverance from abuses must arise from another quarter. It is a happy circumstance that such combined interests are seldom found in a single congregation; for in that case, artistic motives would constantly seek the ascendency. But where the excitement of a convention has in some measure subsided, the pastor, understanding the position of things, can usually manage to give the right direction to his people.

But we need not here enlarge. The remedy

before us, even in the most trying cases, is still to give timely instruction as the basis of appropriate effort; and the nature of the difficulty will suggest the kind of instruction demanded. We need not check the progress of musical improvement, in order to guide it in right directions. We need not question the advantages of taste, because it has sometimes led us astray. But we must be all the more careful. Even where arrangements and influences are as we could desire, where praise is comely in manner and devotional in spirit, we have need to be watchful. Temptations will arise. The "musical world" will try its censures, or flatteries, or allurements. Leaders may change, members may change, who are of a different spirit. And above all, the adversary of souls, always vigilant and unwearied, will take every possible advantage of circumstances: and never be more encouraged than when there is want of watchfulness. The pastor must keep his eye upon the interests of praise as he would on those of prayer. Personal exertions, both in and out of the pulpit, are as really necessary in the one case as in the other.

Pastoral Influence.

But the labor will not be unprofitable. It will secure delightful influences. Nor will it always be difficult. In reference to the regulation of schools and rehearsals—to the proper instruction of children—to the promotion of praise in families—to the selection of tunes, and the ordering of choirs and instrumental accompaniments, it may be said, that "wherever there is a will, there is a way," and one which can be readily discovered and profitably pursued. Let us commence operations on a scriptural basis, and be influenced by a Christian spirit, and for the most part, experience will prove a satisfactory guide. There is nothing in the nature of these interests which need occasion embarrassment. Evils have arisen through false theories and consequent neglects.

In reference to the leading subject of this appeal, we must act consistently and with due intelligence, if we expect success. For if we will still insist on the *spiritual* efficacy of æsthetic influences, or if we will govern our efforts, as if such a thing had a real existence, we may still be greatly troubled. We will *deserve* to be

troubled. And it may be well if troubles will drive us to the discharge of our duty. Here, as we have said, is the fruitful source of all our difficulties; and whether we favor the idea of this imaginary efficiency, or, whether disbelieving, we infer the uselessness of singing devotional words, it matters little. We will be equally in error, and equally subject to disappointments and perplexities. But, let us act intelligently, and with unanimity, and in Christian faithfulness, and no unreasonable amount of effort will be required. It is, doubtless, in the power of the Christians and Christian ministers of this favored land, to restore praise to its proper basis, and by the Divine blessing upon their efforts, to procure for it those peculiar and delightful influences, which are intended by the great Head of the Church. Too long has it been degraded from its rightful position, by the mistaken courses of those who were bound in duty to sustain it. It will never be restored by neglect, or accident, or misrule. Such a miracle need not be expected. Those who are spiritual and influential, aided by their pastor,

must put their hand to the work in good earnest, or it will never be accomplished. A thousand other methods may be successively tried, but all will be in vain, as to any true and permanent result.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

The subject is momentous—Must be thoroughly taken in hand—Neglect inexcusable—The cause demands speedy action—Who should be most forward and zealous in the undertaking?

But, finally, we have seen what ought to be done, and who should be the actors, and with what spirit they should be guided. We have pointed out the methods to be pursued, and have shown their practical bearings and operations. And we have done this, not in the way of abstract speculation, but as the result of experience and observation, for the last fifty years, directly within the circle of musical and religious transactions. We have spoken plainly, and we trust, directly to the purpose. And now that the subject is entirely before us, what more can be said with the hope of strengthening this appeal. Is it a trifling matter that praise has been so long deserted, secularized, misunderstood, and desecrated? God proposes to be honored in the offerings of praise. Is it a small matter that He is so often, so exten-

sively, and so deeply dishonored in the assemblies of His people? All this, too, while the remedy lies plainly within our power? It can not be. That work which is the joy of angels and glorified spirits in the sanctuary above, ought to be here, a most hallowed employment. And to trifle with it in this world of hope and of privilege, while it is given us as a rich foretaste of joys to come, must be inexpressibly displeasing in the sight of God. We might speak of the many privileges and advantages which would arise in connection with faithfulness in this cause. We might speak of Christian enjoyment, of growth in grace. We might speak of happy influences upon the pulpit, and upon Christian assemblies, and upon private circles and families. We might speak of powerful revivals of religion, in many instances promoted by this instrumentality. We might speak of Christians, distinguished for self-denial and holy activity in the Church, whose first abiding religious impressions were received in the well-ordered schools and rehearsals of Christian psalmody. But while it is a delightful truth, that God has been wont to smile graciously upon such

endeavors of faithfulness in the cultivation of praise, we choose rather to ground this appeal upon the simple basis of obligation. Let us remember that the general possession of NATIVE TALENT, sufficient for the object before us, argues a corresponding extent of RESPONSIBILITY. If it is *right* for any man to neglect the praises of God in the sanctuary, let him do so if he will, and undergo the loss of a precious benefit. If it is *right* for any neglecter of music to disturb the devotions of the assembly by his discordant noises, let him do so. If it is *right* for men of influence among churches and pastors to withhold their efforts from such a cause, let them do so, and continue to bear the perplexities and discomforts which surround them. But if this *is wrong—all wrong*, what shall be said of such delinquency? The question is an important one, in the case of individuals. How shall it be decided? Not, surely, on the ground of personal inclination, or comfort, or convenience, or comparative amount of talent, but on the principle of sound, Christian obligation. We leave it for the earnest, prayerful consideration of our readers. Whatever is to

Obligation to Activity.

be said of the duty of those who lost the advantages of early instruction, and are now advanced in life, the duty of multitudes who are inactive, is perfectly plain. Let talent everywhere be drawn forth and improved for the general edification. And who among the favored number, should be so forward in zeal and in earnest effort, as those who have made the greatest progress in the Divine life, and have drunk deepest from the fountains of redeeming love? They are furnished with a powerful motive. Surely love and gratitude should incite them to activity. We have seen enough of indifference in congregations at large. We have seen enough of mere amateur performances and artistic personations of devotion. The soul sickens at the thought of them. Away with such heartlessness in the worship of God! We plead for a revival of sacred praise. We plead for the restoration of sound principles and hallowed influences, such as the subject demands, and such as originally prevailed. And as our plea is drawn directly from the pages of inspiration, we hope and trust it will not be in vain.

Principles will live.

The writer of these pages is reminded, by the lapse of years, that he must soon be called from the long-cherished scene of his labors. Others will succeed him. His name and his influence will be forgotten. But the principles he has advocated are destined to live; for they accord with the teachings of the Bible. And now, while in the full vigor of health and activity, he gives his deliberate—perhaps his last—testimony to their truth and importance. Through the blessing of the great Head of the Church, he trusts that it will not be in vain.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

We present under this head a number of extracts gleaned from various sources, which have a bearing upon the preceding discussion. For every shade of thought they contain, we, of course, would not be individually responsible; yet, if we mistake not, they will prove sufficiently suggestive to thinking minds.

I.

DECLENSION IN CHURCH MUSIC.

The following appeared in the New York *Observer*, and New York *Evangelist* of 1838:

A celebrated eastern traveler informs us of a singular musical custom prevailing among the Jews at Tiberias. While the Rabbin is chanting certain portions of the Psalms, the congregation, he says, frequently imitate, by their voice and gestures, the meaning of some remarkable passages. When, for example, the Rabbin pronounces the words, "Praise the Lord with the sound of the trumpet," they imitate the sound of such an instrument through their closed fists: when a "horrible tempest" occurs, they puff and blow to represent the

storm: and when "the cries of the righteous in distress" are mentioned, they set up a loud screaming. This practice might be quoted as a fine burlesque upon much that passes at the present day for imitative expression: but not to insist upon this idea, it might be well for those among us who have been better instructed as to the *spiritual* claims of devotion, to inquire how far, in a *religious* point of view, the prevailing style of cultivated psalmody rises above that of the poor deluded Tiberians. Of course it is more refined—more consistent with the principles of enlightened taste: but beyond this, in the majority of instances, I fear there is not very much to be said. By the aid of a professional organist, we have about the same mimetic accompaniments: the utterance from the choir, in such circumstances, is often as inarticulate as the tooting and puffing of the Tiberians; and, as to the spirituality of the exercise, we not only have, in a multitude of instances, the unconverted for our *chief* singers, but frequently men of base principles and questionable morals, as the leaders in this part of the service; while, at the same time, most of the members of the church are sitting in their pews as mere silent listeners.

Look at the scene which is usually presented. While the hymn is read indifferently from the desk, as if no important results were anticipated from the exercise the worshipers are yet found to be attentive, and they seem to manifest some interest in the subject: but when the tune is to be given out, the whole aspect changes. If the

music appears coarse, all are restless: but if it chances to be very fine, then a small portion of the listeners who are amateurs, are evidently delighted with the entertainment, and a few others here and there, sympathize with them without much knowledge or discrimination. All these for the time being are virtually at a public concert, and the singers look down upon them as if anxious to catch the smile of approbation. Another small portion of the assembly, whose physical gifts have always been neglected, are attentive to the service from principle: but the rest, forming in many cases a large majority of all who are present, are found to be remarkably inattentive. The beloved pastor himself sets the example. *His* part in the matter was merely to *read* the hymn; and now he must look out a passage of Scripture, examine his notices, adjust the pages of his manuscript, receive messages from the elders or deacons, or whisper some important hint to a brother minister sitting by his side, or descend from the pulpit to speak with some member of the congregation. As all this is to be done in the few brief moments allowed to the singers, the pastor, without the least thought of its impropriety, becomes remarkably active, that there may be no waste of time. An example so conspicuous is not lost upon the industrious sexton with his noisy offices, and the influence spreads like contagion throughout the assembly.

What a spectacle! Are these people all engaged in a solemn act of worship? During the *reading* of the hymn, perchance they were measurably so: but now, while, according to the Di-

vinely constituted method of sacred praise, the chief impression is to be made, they are otherwise engaged. The poor Tiberians are *earnest* in their way of singing; not so the worshipers at large in a Christian assembly. They have something else to engage their attention during the office of sacred praise. These irrelevant activities, it is true, are not always equally manifest. There is some difference as to congregations, circumstances, times and places; yet if they are to be taken as a fair criterion of the general state of mind with respect to the spiritual claims of the exercise, they are everywhere sufficiently prevalent to reveal the most painful barrenness. I blush to think of it. My soul is ashamed when I consider the existing state of things.

Let it not be said that all this complicated mockery is merely the fault of cultivated singers. Though these must answer for their own sins, the rest of the congregation will not thereby be rendered innocent. They are at least accessory to the abuses, while they treat the whole subject, as I am constrained to think, with the most inexcusable neglect. Nor let it be said that in the absence of a choir, the state of things is any more favorable. The abuses may be somewhat modified, but they are neither removed nor lessened by the circumstance. The same irrelevant activities are here observable; and the abuses are often more flagrant here than in the former case. A greater number, it is true, attempt to sing, and this might be well, but their manner for the most part, is neither musical nor consentaneous, while their ut-

terance is indistinct and unimpressive. They sometimes make all manner of noises, but it can hardly be said that they sing, in any proper sense of the phrase. I am aware that many people are attached to this peculiar method, and think it highly devotional. So think the Tiberians in regard to their own chosen method; but men of sound discrimination in such matters, think differently. If this method does indeed subserve the interests of true devotion, how does it happen that such endless abuses are tolerated? Would any one think of passing round the contribution-box, or of inviting the people to exchange seats during the office of public prayer? Yet, during the office of praise, such things are done abundantly in many churches, on the mere plea of saving time, and without one thought of their proving a hinderance to devotion!

I do not undertake to say which of the two methods in the present state of the art, is the most unfavorable to religious edification. I suspect the grand adversary of souls will be well satisfied with either, so long as he can prevent a reform in favor of spirituality. Forms it is true are not all equally pleasing: yet *empty formality*, however convenient or attractive it may seem, is a miserable substitute for real devotion.

The following remarkable passage appears in the book of discipline of the Presbyterian Church:

"God's ministers ought to be careful not to make their sermons so long as to interfere with or

exclude the more important duties of prayer and praise," etc.

More important duties! What can this mean? Sermons perhaps are not generally too long, and we are accustomed to hear them with devout attention. Prayer excites a universal feeling of solemnity; but praise is accompanied for the most part by different demonstrations. It is attended on the one hand by lassitude, weariness, and disgust; and on the other by that species of sentimentalism which results from the gratification of taste. Where the style is uncultivated, the singing seems to occupy a sort of recess in the solemnities: and where the music is attractive, the scene for the time being reminds us of a rehearsal or public concert. The people are interested, sometimes deeply so, but the interest is not generally of the most desirable kind. It is that kind which makes them think of the song, the adaptation, and the execution, till the sentiments of the hymn, the prayer, and the sermon are forgotten.

This is a sad, though faithful picture of musical influence in too many of our churches. Neither of the two extremes here presented, exhibits any thing in accordance with that clause in the rule to which we have referred, and as no one believes in the efficacy of restrictions which will be perpetually violated, it becomes a question whether the clause should not be stricken out. If this were done, then a new rule might be added like the following:

"As praise among all religious duties is the one

which is least in importance, which is the most liable to be misunderstood, and the most difficult to be regulated: it becomes advisable when a hymn has been given out, that, either on the one hand the sexton attend to his more noisy affairs, the deacons to their contribution-boxes, the elders to the disposal of pulpit notices, and the pastor to those various items which would interfere with the regular solemnities; or that, on the other hand, the people be allowed to enjoy a short musical entertainment, as a relaxation from the strictness of devotion."

The proposal of a rule like this may seem harsh in the ear of orthodoxy, but it is in strict accordance with the practical habits and maxims which extensively prevail. Consistency is a jewel; and what could sooner secure its inestimable advantages, than the adoption of such a rule?

The *Baptist Register*, in reference to the same abuses, copies from one of those journals a remark that "the idea of praise to God, as the object of singing in public worship, has in many churches become obsolete, while mere display, as at theatrical concerts, is the grand aim of the singers, who are appropriately termed *performers*."

To this the editor adds a significant comment:

"We are very sorry to say, that from the observations made by us in several of our congregations, we should be unable to bear any better tes-

timony. It is sorely to be lamented, but how it is to be remedied we know not, unless pastors take the thing seriously in hand, and point out repeatedly the solemnity and design of this part of Divine service. The proper encomiums which have been so repeatedly passed on choirs at associations and other occasions, have been carried by us to a shocking length, and have contributed in no small degree to injure the spirituality of this part of worship, and here we have gone altogether beyond our Pædobaptist neighbors. We have set up our choirs, and eulogized them as the world do a company of theatrical performers. How must such things appear in the sight of Him who requires us to sing with the 'spirit and with the understanding?' "

The following appeared, a few years since, in one of the religious papers of this city :

In the earlier ages of Christianity, the principal *chanter* was appointed under sanction of a solemn charge. That which was prescribed for this purpose by one of the councils of Carthage, was as follows :

"See that thou believe with thine heart what thou singest with thy mouth : and that what thou believest with thine heart, thou carry out in thy walk and conversation."

The chief singer of modern days is chosen with less reference to religious qualifications than to vocal powers. But let us suppose the Carthaginian precedent to be re-established and carried into

successful operation. Then, under the extensive influence of proper cultivation, elementary and religious, we might look with confidence for the required results. Then the music, instead of destroying, as it often does, the entire influence of a hymn, would clothe the language and the sentiment of it with additional interest. Then such lines as,

> "Had I a thousand tongues, they all
> Should join the harmony"—

would no longer be accompanied by pulpit messages and contribution boxes—nor such as,

> "Let *knowledge* lead the song,
> Nor mock him with a solemn sound
> Upon a thoughtless tongue,"

be sung on the one hand without the least knowledge of art; or on the other, with skill in connection with graceless affections. Then such a passage as

> "Seven times a day I lift my hands
> And pay my thanks to Thee,"

instead of falling from lips that speak false, would be connected with a habitual spirit of praise, at church and in the social circle, at home and abroad. Such lines, too, as,

> "Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord," etc.,

would be uttered in the breathings of true penitence, and be followed by a blameless life—and such as,

Declension

"Now I resolve, with all my heart,
With all my powers, to serve the Lord,"

would be accompanied with real consecration of soul; a consecration never afterward to be revoked. Then, in short, the language of the lips [of the singers] would no longer be at variance with those of the heart and life. There would be meaning, consistency, and true commitment of soul in the office of holy song.

Why then, should not the ancient precedent of which we are speaking be at once restored? Were the Carthaginian council wrong in establishing it? Did they attach undue importance to the office of praise? Far from it. They followed, in this respect, the examples and precepts of the Holy Scriptures. The chief singer, according to the Bible, sustains a holy and responsible office; while those associated with him are bound to be personal worshipers, singing appropriately as to manner, and in the true spirit of devotion.

The *Biblical Repository* of 1844, speaks thus on the character of church music:

Once it was cultivated by kings and princes, and teachers of religion—now it is left with the less influential classes in the community. Once, the singing of psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, was an exercise as truly and as exclusively religious, as was that of preaching, exhortation, or prayer—now, the same exercise is often little else than an entertainment for the gratification of taste. Once, those who were the most spiritual were the

most active in the solemn work of praise—now they are generally the most negligent: or, earnestly engaging, as they sometimes consent to do, in the discharge of this duty, they are often seen to decline in spirituality. They appear in religious things as if some strange lethargy had overtaken them: as if some withering hand had dried up within them all the sources of spiritual life. They become other men. They learn by degrees to exercise themselves with the *sentimentalities* of song, instead of lifting up *holy hands and hearts to God* in the solemn service.

The many painful examples of this nature which have been witnessed in modern times, have awakened the jealousy of good men against the claims of the art, and led many to imagine that it was designed chiefly for the circumstances of other times, while now it is waxing old and ready to vanish away. Why else, they would ask, do we receive so little benefit from exercises in praise, and why are we so often foiled in our efforts toward rendering it an efficient instrument of edification? * * *

* * * Sacred music as a Divine institution, was not destined, like the ancient Jewish ritual, to decay. It is to stand while time endures, as a lively representation of the worship of the sanctuary above. Nor can we doubt that it will yet be seen to operate more efficiently than ever in enlivening the devotions of the sincere worshiper.

Character

II.

HYMN TUNES.

Something far beyond grammatical accuracy should be aimed at in the selection of tunes for public and private worship. We have often spoken upon this subject on various occasions. But we here present an interesting extract from Rev. H. W. Beecher:

Any theory that denies to church music a power upon the imagination and the feelings, *as music*, and makes it a mere servile attendant upon words, will carry certain mischief upon its path, and put back indefinitely the cause of church music.

The tunes which burden our modern books, in hundreds and thousands, utterly devoid of character, without meaning or substance, may be sung a hundred times, and not a person in the congregation will remember them. There is nothing to remember. They are the very emptiness of fluent noise. But let a true tune be sung, and every person of sensibility, every person of feeling, every child even, is aroused and touched. The melody clings to them. On the way home, snatches of it will be heard on this side and on that: and when, the next Sabbath, the same song is heard, one and another of the people fall in, and the volume grows with each verse, until at length the song, breaking forth as a many-rilled stream from the hills, grows deeper, and flows on, broad as a mighty river! Such tunes are never forgotten.

They cling to us through our whole life. We carry them with us upon our journey. We sing them in the forest. The workman follows the plow with sacred songs. Children catch them, and singing only for the joy it gives them now, are yet laying up for all their life food of the sweetest joy. Such tunes give new harmony and sweetness even to the hymns which float upon their current. And when some celestial hymn of Wesley, or of the scarcely less than inspired Watts, is wafted upon such music, the soul is lifted up above all its ailments, and rises into the very presence of God, with joys no longer unspeakable, though full of glory:

We copy from the same source, some good remarks on congregational singing.

We do not think that Congregational Singing will ever prevail with power, until *Pastors of Churches* appreciate its importance, and universally labor to secure it. If ministers regard singing as but a decorous kind of amusement, pleasantly relieving or separating the more solemn acts of worship, it will always be degraded. The pastor, in many cases, in small rural churches, may be himself the leader. In larger societies, where a musical director is employed, the pastor should still be the animating center of the music, encouraging the people to take part in it, keeping before them their duty and their benefit in participating in this most delightful part of public worship.

It is a very general impression that the pastor

is to teach and to pray, but another man is to sing. Music is farmed out, and the unity of public services is marred by two systems of exercises conducted by different persons, and oftentimes without concord or sympathy with each other, and sometimes even with such contrariety, that the organ and the choir effectually neutralize the pulpit. While it may not be needful that the pastor should perform the part of a musical leader, yet it is certain that there will not be a spirit of song in the whole congregation if he is himself indifferent to it, and the first step toward congregational singing must be in the direction of the ministry.

The following is from a more artistic source:

In the production of psalm-tunes *extremes* should be avoided. The structure should not be too artistic and complicated, nor too very simple and unpretending. The melody and the rhythm should not be light and secular, nor heavy and antiquated. It should not have such an attraction as to draw off the mind from the subject, like ill-ordered elocution in the pulpit, nor so destitute of interest, as to afford no help in religious meditation. The tune, too, if it is to affect us, should be the evident offspring of feeling in the composer. These, and other hints of the sort, may properly be regarded as fundamental. How incompetent then is mere *grammatical* knowledge as a guide to composition! And how superficial and unsatisfactory is that criticism on music-books which dwells chiefly upon minor points in grammar!

Hymns.

III.

HYMNOLOGY.

The full importance of this subject is not generally understood. Many of the hymns in circulation have little claims as to poetry or sentiment. Some of them to the singer are wholly impracticable. He can neither illustrate their meaning, nor add to their significance. Yet they will be given out. Setting forth some mere heads of discourse, a pastor often selects them because they bear a relation to his sermon. This is unfortunate. If a hymn is to be effectively sung, it should have some traits that are lyrical. Hymn-books, too, we fear, are exciting but a feeble influence upon the piety of the present generation. There is some zeal in procuring them—but, excepting on the Sabbath at church, they are often laid aside with as little ceremony as if they were almanacs out of date. In these circumstances we take pleasure in quoting at some length from the interesting writer above named. On some points we might feel obliged to differ from him, but we thank him for such thoughts as these, which are gleaned from the New York *Independent*:

'The discovery of a statue, a vase, or even of a cameo, inspires art-critics and collectors with en-

thusiastic industry, to search whether it be a copy or an original, of what age, and by what artist. But I think that a heart-hymn, sprung from the soul's deepest life, and which is, as it were, the words of the heart in those hours of transfiguration in which it beholds God and heavenly angels, is nobler, by far, than any old simulacrum, or carved ring, or heathen head, however exquisite in lines and feature! To trace back a hymn to its source, to return upon the path along which it has trodden on its mission of mercy through generations, to witness its changes, its obscurations and re-appearances, is a work of the truest religious enthusiasm, and far surpasses in importance the tracing of the ideas of mere art. For hymns are the exponents of the inmost piety of the Church. They are crystalline tears, or blossoms of joy, or holy prayers, or incarnated raptures. They are the jewels which the Church has worn: the pearls, the diamonds and precious stones, formed into amulets more potent against sorrow and sadness than the most famous charms of wizard or magician. And he who knows the way that hymns flowed, knows where the blood of piety ran, and can trace its veins and arteries to the very heart.

No other composition is like an experimental hymn. It is not a mere poetic impulse. It is not a thought, a fancy, a feeling dressed upon words. It is the voice of experience speaking from the soul a few words that condense and often represent a whole life. It is the life, too, not of the natural feelings growing wild, but of regenerated feeling, inspired by God to a heavenly destiny, and

making its way through troubles and hinderances, through joys and victories, dark or light, sad or serene, yet always struggling forward. Forty years the heart may have been in the battle, and one verse shall express the fruit of the whole. One great hope may come to fruit only at the end of many years, and as the ripening of a hundred experiences. As there be flowers that drink up the dews of spring and summer, and feed upon all the rains, and only just before the winter comes, burst forth into bloom, so is it with some of the noblest blossoms of the soul. The bolt that prostrated Saul gave him the exceeding brightness of Christ; and so some hymns could never have been written but for a heart-stroke that well-nigh crushed out the life. It is cleft in two by bereavement, and out of the rift comes forth, as by resurrection, the form and voice that shall never die out of the world. Angels sat at the grave's mouth; and so hymns are the angels that rise up out of our griefs, and darkness, and dismay.

Thus born, a hymn is one of those silent ministers which God sends to those who are to be heirs of salvation. It enters into the tender imagination of childhood, and casts down upon the chambers of its thought a holy radiance which shall never quite depart. It goes with the Christian, singing to him all the way, as if it were the airy voice of some guardian spirit. When darkness of trouble, settling fast, is shutting out every star, a hymn bursts through and brings light like a torch. It abides by our side in sickness. It goes forth with us in joy to syllable that joy.

And thus, after a time, we clothe a hymn with the memories and associations of our own life. It is garlanded with flowers which grew in our hearts. Born of the experience of one mind, it becomes the unconscious record of many minds. We sang it perhaps the morning that our child died. We sang this one on that Sabbath evening when after ten years, the family were once more all together. There be hymns that were sung while the mother lay a dying: that were sung when the child, just converted, was filling the family with the joy of Christ new-born, and laid not now in a manger, but in a heart. And thus, sprung from a wondrous life, they lead a life yet more wonderful. When they first come to us they are like the single strokes of a bell ringing down to us from above: but, at length, a single hymn becomes a whole chime of bells, mingling and discoursing to us the harmonies of a life's Christian experience. * * * * * * * *

And oftentimes, when in the mountain country, far from noise and interruption, we wrought upon these hymns for our vacation tasks, we almost forgot the living world, and were lifted up by noble lyrics as upon mighty wings, and went back to the days when Christ sang with His disciples, when the disciples sang too, as in our churches they have almost ceased to do. Oh! but for one moment even, to have sat transfixed, and to have listened to the hymn that Christ sang, and to the singing! But the olive-trees did not hear his murmured notes more clearly than, rapt in imagination, we have heard them!

Hymns.

There, too, are the hymns of St. Ambrose and many others, that rose up like birds in the early centuries, and have come flying and singing all the way down to us. Their wing is untired yet, nor is the voice less sweet now than it was a thousand years ago. Though they sometimes disappeared, they never sank: but, as engineers for destruction send bombs that, rising high up in wide curves, overleap great spaces and drop down in a distant spot, so God, in times of darkness, seems to have caught up these hymns, spanning long periods of time, and letting them fall at distant eras, not for explosion and wounding, but for healing and consolation.

There are crusaders' hymns, that rolled forth their truths upon the oriental air, while a thousand horses' hoofs kept time below, and ten thousand palm-leaves whispered and kept time above! Other hymns, fulfilling the promise of God that His saints should mount up with wings as eagles, have borne up the sorrows, the desires, and the aspirations of the poor, the oppressed, and the persecuted, of Huguenots, of Covenanters, and of Puritans, and winged them to the bosom of God.

In our own time, and in the familiar experiences of daily life, how are hymns mossed over and vine-clad with domestic associations!

One hymn hath opened the morning in ten thousand families, and dear children with sweet voices have charmed the evening in a thousand places with the utterance of another. Nor do I know of any steps now left on earth by which one may so soon rise above trouble or weariness as the

verses of a hymn and the notes of a tune. And if the angels that Jacob saw sang when they appeared, then I know that the ladder which he beheld was but the scale of divine music let down from heaven to earth. * * *

A Hymn-book is the popular doctrine-book. We suspect that it would be found that even educated and reflective men are more indebted to hymns for their knowledge of Scripture truth than to all the prose writers and commentators upon the Bible. And in regard to the highest truths of Scripture, there are no commentaries so safe, so full, so identical in spirit and temper, as are the best hymns of Christendom. It is worthy of remark, too, that almost every topic of Scripture has been gloriously translated through the heart into the English tongue by a hymn-birth.

The sublime representations of the Old Testament of Jehovah have touched and kindled the sacred singers of our day, as really as of the ancient Hebrew periods. The grandeur of God, His wisdom, power, goodness universal presence: His providence, mercy, and love; His creative works and His redemptive works, are set forth in the voices of hundreds of hymns. The Bible stands uneclipsed, nor can ever any human effusion supplant it, any more than art can ever dispossess or overlay and hide the natural world. But hymns may be used in *setting* the Bible, as pearls are made to hedge in diamonds upon a golden ground.

If the Bible should perish out of our language, it could almost be gathered up again, in substance,

from out of our hymns — that take wing from the very period of creation, and fold their wings only when they touch the crystal battlements. When the birds begin to look from the north southward, in autumnal weather, a few, springing from the reeds and shrubs of Labrador, begin the aerial caravan, and, as they wind southward, out of every tree and every copse, from orchard and garden, come forth new singers, increasing in numbers at every furlong, until at length, coming down from their high pathways in innumerable flocks, they cover provinces and fill forests, and are heard triumphing through unfrosted orchards, amid the vines, the olives, and the oranges, with such wondrous bursts of song, that, as one lies between sleep and waking, he might think the Advent renewed, and God's angels to be in the air. And so it has pleased us often in thought, to liken the rise, and spread, and flight, and multitude of hymns that have come down from the beginnings of time into God's pleasant gardens and vineyards, in our days, increasing as they flew. Only there is no bird that can sing like a hymn. There are no meanings in all the mingled sounds of all the singers of the grove, or hedge, or lawn, like the voices of hymns that utter all the mysteries of Christ's love in the human soul.

Is it wrong to believe that God gave forth a subsidiary inspiration, and taught men to sing hymns for the Church, as He had inspired holy men of old to speak and to write for her? They are not equal to Scripture nor clothed with its authority, nor to be accepted as an unerring rule

of faith and practice, as is the Bible; but I would fain believe that in their lower sphere they were born of the same divine inspirations as the originals in Scripture; and though the hymn-book is not a sun, it is its satellite, and takes its light, to reflect it upon our eyes, in rays which are more tolerable because diminished in power, being tempered to the weakness of our eyes, which can not always look the sun full in the face.

But leaving out these poetical reasonings, experience has shown that the Church has derived large and various instruction from the hymn-book. But its uses have not yet been fully explored. Its service is scarcely begun.

In the sanctuary the Bible must speak, for the most part, through the voice of the pastor and teacher. The congregation may murmur responses of Scripture, but can not read it with those continuous and clear utterances which are required for understanding and edification. The true voice of the congregation must be heard through the *hymn-book*.

In our Christian congregations, for the most part, the people are only recipients; they are not participators or actors in public worship. The minister prays *for* them, the choir sings *to* them, and the minister again preaches to or at them. Their duty seems comprised in a respectful sympathy and patient reception of the vicarious worship. This ought not to be. It can not long continue in any congregation without drying up the springs of feeling, and leaving public worship arid as a desert, or with only an occasional spot of

greenness. And that grievous evil has turned the longings of some wise and good men to liturgical forms. That the congregation may be enabled to speak, and to utter its own feeling, it has been proposed that every church should make selections of Scripture to be recited, and responses to be uttered, and articles of faith to be repeated every Sabbath, until around these great Scripture truths should cluster such hallowed associations as should make them powerful for one's whole life.

But powerful associations will not form upon literal *sameness*. Verbal repetitions stale upon the ear, and at length heap it up with mere words. A reciting of the very same things, in the same places, over and over again, will not add, but take away sacred influence. God's Word is to be a light to our feet and a lamp to our path, but it is not to be laid down as stepping-stones in our path, worn with perpetual treadings and recalcitrations.

It is not familiarity that breeds contempt, but *sameness*, and this is the marrow of that proverb. And thus it came to pass, when God would teach the world—not forgetting what He had done in the outward world—where seeds and plants are true to their species, but never identical, varying with amazing versatility, through leaf, flower, fruit, and seed, so that individuality is clothed with diversity, and external differences hide internal sameness and identity—by this same rule He created the sacred Scriptures, whose truths are *one* and the *same* in the long revelation of four thousand years, but never alike in *expression*. One substance endlessly varied in expression is

God's delight, in and out of the Bible. The language of the race, and all the symbols of nature, and the fertility and fullness of the human heart, were employed, that the Divine truth, like a mighty sap in the Tree of Life, should burst forth in new leaves and flowers of expression, new clusters and fruits, all the way down to the Apocalyptic close.

And then, lest the book should, by a literal using, grow stale, and pall upon the accustomed ear, God appointed men in every age to dissolve the Bible into their own hearts again, and give it forth from Sabbath to Sabbath in the fresh and new forms of life belonging to each age, each country, and every congregation.

Identity of substance and truth, but profuse and endless variations of form, this is the genius of the natural and the spiritual revelations of God.

Instead, then, of venturing upon a course that is at variance with analogy, not consonant with human want, and not justified by any success of experiment hitherto, it is better to seek some method which shall give the most various utterance in the congregation to the same substantial truths, so that the Word of God shall always be the life and power, and men's language the leaves and blossoms, that in autumn and spring play death and resurrection in glorious rounds, forever changing but never altering the truth. *The hymn-book is the liturgy of the congregation.* It gives to us history, biography, doctrine, experience. It furnishes the essential truths of God, and the essential experiences of man. But so

A Report.

large is its store, so various its expression, that the same truths may be daily repeated and the same language never twice employed in the year.

It is a wrong and a sin for God's people not to accept this sacred language of worship! It is a grievous blindness that we do not accept this wonderful liturgy of hymns framed from the heart of ages for us!

Sacred hymns, whose nests have been found in every age, from the very gray and twilight of creation, seem to have flown out and flocked to our days, and are filling the boughs of our churches, like trees in the garden of the Lord, as with birds from heaven, flitting from branch to branch. All the old days are heard speaking in our days. The voices of all ages are collected as an airy choir in our own. The whole world has been learning to speak for six thousand years that we might have a *language of the people* for the sanctuary!

IV.

INFLUENCE OF ORATORIOS AND CONCERTS UPON CHURCH-MUSIC.

The following article on a subject of great interest was read a few years since before a musical convention in this city as the report of a special committee to whom the subject had been referred the preceding year. It called forth considerable

Oratorial

discussion at the time, but was not then given to the public. The committee, it will be seen, took moderate ground. They might have pressed the argument further, but were fearful of creating excitement and irritation. Still the facts and arguments they present are worthy of the most serious consideration. We give the article entire:

QUESTIONS.

How far is the influence of oratorial rehearsals beneficial to psalmody, and

Can public concerts of sacred music be given with propriety for secular purposes?

The increased attention which is devoted of late to the musical art, and the multiplication of public performances of sacred music throughout the land can not fail to exert powerful influences upon the songs of the sanctuary. To ascertain in some measure the character of these influences is the object of the present Report.

The two questions here presented, involve considerations which are grave and momentous; and all of us, whether artists or amateurs, singers or auditors, are interested in the right disposal of them. The first in order is—

How far is the influence of oratorial rehearsals beneficial to psalmody?

This question, it will be perceived, is not an artistic one. If it were so, we might dispose of it

Influence.

in a single word. Oratorios are noble specimens of composition. They are as the classics of the art. It would be as vain to reason against their utility, as to frame philippics against the great productions of a Homer, a Virgil, or a Milton. They are invaluable sources of improvement to the musical student, and form an essential part of his library. But the question before us is a practical one. We are to speak of relative influences *as they are, and have been upon psalmody;* and in *this* respect, there is sufficient room for honest differences in opinion.

Our decisions upon this subject, however, must necessarily be influenced by the views we entertain of the nature and the responsibilities of church-music, as a means of Christian edification. The community in regard to church-music may, for the convenience of discussion, be ranked in two general classes. In the one we would include those who are governed, chiefly, by artistic views, habits and associations; and in the other, those who are mostly controlled by evangelical sentiments in religion. Both classes, we are aware, may occasionally be found to subscribe to sentiments which are not in accordance with their practice—but we here refer to such sentiments and habits in church-music as are constantly *embodied in practice;* and in this respect, all, we think, may be ranked in the two classes just described. Let us compare the practical views entertained by these classes, and see what are their bearings on the question here at issue.

1. Those who are under the bias of artistic

views, fix their attention upon the *music*, as that which in practice chiefly concerns the office of praise. Those of the other class, on the contrary, fix their mind upon the great themes of salvation, which are to be so enunciated as to exert a deeper influence upon the worshipers. The one class enjoying the music on its own account, become critical and fastidious: the other, regarding it chiefly as an instrument of edification, prefer, as in pulpit oratory, chasteness and simplicity of style, in distinction from every thing which savors of artistic display. It is not difficult to see, in this respect, which of the two classes would find its views most promoted by joining in the rehearsals of an oratorio—for here, artistic views, arrangements, habits and susceptibilities, are found exclusively to prevail. Such an amount of skill in execution is demanded, too, as of necessity to absorb the attention of the singer.

2. By the one class it seems to be taken for granted, that the art can secure its proper results, in religious music, irrespective of religious considerations in the minds of the performers. Many will confidently affirm this; and the numbers are still greater, who are acting in church music as if it were an acknowledged principle. This is seen in the manner in which singers are obtained and instructed: and in the irreligious character of many a teacher and leading singer. But by the other class, the appliances of the art to strictly religious purposes, are viewed in the light of impressive oratory, which requires indispensably, a schooling of the affections in the persons of the

performers. Here again, it is not difficult to decide which class will find its views and habits promoted by oratorial singing: especially, as many portions of an oratorio, from the high character of the music, require talent in execution of the first order, which perchance is to be obtained only by drawing upon the theater; or from the ranks of decided immorality.

3. Many of the artistic class neglect altogether, in church music, the training of the emotions. They habitually give utterance to sacred themes during the hours of preparation, in connection with mirth and thoughtless hilarity. Some teachers seeing the impropriety of such management, endeavor by the power of mournful pieces, to kindle up a class of transient emotions of the opposite extreme. Those who have more knowledge and experience, endeavor, by close adaptation and tasteful execution, to call into exercise, the sentimentalities which are in accordance with the subject-matter of the song: but which after all are nothing better than the offspring of musical susceptibility. Any thing beyond this, is neither attempted nor supposed to be necessary.

With the other class, however, the question of Christian edification, is understood to turn upon the cultivation of true religious affections, such as relate to other religious exercises. And this is seen in the fact, that their rehearsals of church music are constantly conducted in accordance with religious order: and that even the claims of musical expression are made subservient to pious reflections and aspirations. But who will pretend that

Oratorial

oratorial rehearsals, such as are usually witnessed, could exert any congenial influences, upon the views, and habits, and cherished associations of this class of singers, when the words of the drama are strictly and decidedly religious? They would be as far from such a result as merriment is from seriousness, or as mere imaginative sentimentality is from hallowed religious meditation. And let it be here recollected that, while society remains in its present state, professional talent, such as is indispensable to the entire success of the oratorial school, will not be brought into very close connection with religious considerations.

4. It seems in practice to be taken for granted by the one class, that the utmost which can be demanded of the performer, in church music, is skill, taste and conception, such as are appropriate to dramatic personation. This is evinced by the existing methods of training and management; and by the style of the remarks and criticisms which are made upon musical performances in general. All these are seen to be artistic, having nothing in the world to do with questions of practical godliness in the persons of leading members of a choir. Every thing which is found to be "*effective*," in style, goes with them directly to the heart as a matter of course; even though the orisons should be addressed to Dagon or Allah. It suffices with this class, that sensibilities can be enlisted, though perchance, the worship of the emotions be offered to the singers themselves, or at the shrine of a false deity.

But the other class in church music, endeavor

to substitute real worship, in place of a personated devotion. They insist on a full commitment of the soul in praise just as in prayer. Even while the words in singing are didactic and hortatory and not to be directly addressed to God, they regard themselves, in an important sense, as real worshipers. They expect to find, especially in the *leading talent* of a choir, the evidences of decided religious influence. They are watchful and prayerful. They exercise the same suspicious care over imaginative influences in the songs of praise, that they would over oratorical display in exhortation or prayer. Their meetings for rehearsal, their deportment at church, the solemn attitude of their minds during the exercise of praise: and the humble estimate they form of their own affections, attainments and performances, are all, as is conceived, in accordance with the claims of spiritual religion. So far are they from trusting to mere artistic efficacy, that they are accustomed to watch over themselves with godly jealousy as in the presence of the Searcher of hearts.

Now, just in proportion to the strength of these principles, habits, and impressions, in regard to church music, will be the dread of such influences, as attend oratorial singing, whenever the words of the oratorio are of a decided religious character. Persons thus conscientious know too well the power of habit over the affections, not to see in the style of discipline which distinguishes that school, influences which are at variance with their cherished sentiments and aspirations. To be

in the habit of giving utterance to words which are adapted to the solemn use of the church, in the midst of thoughtless hilarity, and in connection with artistic difficulties and embarrassments in execution, is more than they can do, without experiencing in their own case, a decay of spirituality in the exercises of praise in the solemn assembly. Of this they feel assured.

But, not to dwell longer on these distinctions, it is easy to see how they will necessarily affect our decisions on the question here at issue. Among intelligent minds, those who practically maintain that, in time of worship, the music should absorb the attention of the performers, that the art itself is capable of securing legitimate results, and that mere musical susceptibility, or at most well conceived efforts at personation will secure the ends contemplated in the office of praise—will of course hail oratorial rehearsals and performances, skillfully sustained and conducted, as every way beneficial in their influence upon psalmody. Those, on the other hand, who practically maintain that, in the time of worship, the great themes of religion should absorb the attention of the singer, that the music should serve like pulpit oratory, to increase and perpetuate this interest in the themes, and that, to this end, religious motives and affections are by the singers to be continually cultivated and cherished in rehearsals and performances of church music -practically maintaining and inculcating such views as these, it is impossible for them not to recognize in the prevalence of oratorial rehearsals of the usual kind, a class of influences which are

strongly antagonistic to those which they desire to cherish.

Thus the two classes stand, honestly, if not strenuously, maintaining opposite opinions in regard to this subject. Which of the two may be found at the present time the most numerous or influential it is not so material to inquire as which is nearest *right* in its views and practices. If the one is in practice, too regardless of the specific claims of vital religion in church-music, the other is in most instances, we fear, too neglectful of the art, in respect to those properties of style which, in connection with right purposes, are indispensable to edification. Because style with the one class is too artistic, it does not follow that it should be negligent or slovenly with the other. Yet as to *religious* considerations, the evangelical class have nothing to relinquish. Whoever attentively considers the nature of true religion, carefully examines the hallowed themes of salvation which constitute the basis of church-music, and duly reflects upon the character of the numerous precepts and exhortations which have been given in regard to this matter by the great Master of Assemblies Himself, will be constrained to admit, that in the practice of this class of singers, as described above, there are no works of supererogation, no species of religious effort which can properly be termed superfluous. On the contrary, he will rather be led to complain of remaining deficiencies.

With this view of the subject we are led to the conclusion, that the "practical benefits of oratorio singing" are chiefly those which relate to the pro-

motion of music as an art; and these, no doubt, are great and numerous. To what extent they have influence upon psalmody in particular, it seems impossible to determine with any exactness. Different views, as we have seen, will be entertained of this matter. We would be far from undervaluing the merits of classical music; or the efforts of those who are so successfully engaged in making it understood and felt by the community at large. In some important respects, their efforts are worthy of all praise. But we believe that religious music, properly so called, will never become in this country what it ought to be as an instrument of edification, while the religious element is so generally withholden from our systems of instruction and practice—nor can we believe that oratorial singing has any tendency toward restoring this element. This will not be pretended by any one: but what we ask is, that the tendencies shall not be found directly or indirectly adverse to this restoration: and this most surely is a reasonable demand.

There are religious subjects found in the Jewish history, which seem fitted for this species of drama. Witness the oratorios of Sampson and David. But there are subjects, also, which are too solemn, too awful, and too momentous for such treatment; as in the case of those which form the Mount of Olives, where the tendencies to irreverence and desecration are strong, if not irresistible. The same may be said of particular passages in oratorios, such as supplications addressed without meaning to the Supreme Being; or

praises to Jehovah and to Dagon, responding to each other in the same chorus: and this for purposes of amusement or artistic display. The treatment of religious subjects in a light and irreverent manner, can not be too strongly deprecated. Nor can it fail to operate injuriously upon the minds of the singers in reference to exercises of praise. All subjects, however, are not truly sacred which are so denominated by the artist: nor are all which are sacred in reality, found to be equally solemn and momentous. Some are far less liable to abuse than others. And since oratorios furnish so many strains of surpassing excellence, in every *musical* point of view, we are inclined to think that by some changes in management, with respect to selections, rehearsals, and performances, they might be rendered more favorable to the interests of psalmody, than they ever have been. At the same time, let us remember that the true spirit of praise which is so pre-eminently dear and sacred to every enlightened Christian mind, can be acquired and cherished only in connection with a system of training which infuses the religious element. When this element is wanting, the songs of the sanctuary are but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

The present tendencies in church-music, we fear, are decidedly toward artistic extremes: and if they are, we ought to know it, and endeavor to secure the application of an efficient remedy. A spirit of inquiry is already abroad, as to what can be the cause of so much heartlessness in our accustomed songs of praise. The question as one of

Christian experience and Christian principle, will continue to be agitated, till the truth of the matter can be ascertained. It will then be well for us, as cultivators, patrons, and friends of the art, if we have not been found guilty of any material oversight or delinquency.

The first of the two questions thus disposed of, the remaining one, "Can public concerts of religious music be properly given for secular purposes?" need occupy but a single word. It ought distinctly to be understood that religious subjects, in music as in oratory, should always be treated in a reverential manner. To do less than this, is of course to be guilty of desecration. Concerts of religious music, therefore, require great delicacy in management. In the present condition of things, they are continually liable to degenerate into seasons of tasteful amusement, even to playfulness and hilarity. Whenever they do so, their tendency is *decidedly injurious*. Secular subjects, it is true, are not always improperly connected with prayer and praise: for we doubtless need to seek the Divine favor and guidance with respect to them. But on those special occasions, when we strive to become musically effective in the *language* of praise, the temptation to artistical irreverence and display are so great, that we can not be too careful and scrupulous with regard to our arrangements.

The testimony of experience and observation incline us to decide this question in the negative. Let secular music be given for secular purposes,

and religious music for religious purposes. This we think should be adopted as a general rule. The rule, however, as above intimated, does not strictly apply to every thing which is *called sacred by the artist*. Within the range of pieces so denominated, abundant materials may be found which admit of greater freedom as to selection and performance; but the rule applies with truth and emphasis to such pieces as are sacred in the highest sense of the word. Above all, let concerts of a mixed character commingling as subjects of taste, things religious and secular, in the same connections, be entirely discarded. These, in our opinion, are always injurious to the cause of religion and good taste.

But finally, in bringing the discussion of these questions to a close, we would mention the reasons why the friends of improvement in church music find such difficulty in awakening a proper interest in the subject, among the mass of evangelical Christians. The two classes above described have not understood each other, nor have individuals in either class, well understood themselves. Sacred and secular maxims, habits, and associations have been improperly blended. Artists, and amateurs by claiming too much in some respects, have gained too little in others; and, by neglecting things essential to Christian edification, their highest efforts in religious music, have often proved fruitless. On what avail is it to the spiritual worshiper, to listen to fine music if he can not be really edified by it? The fault in this case may in *part* be his own: but it is not *chiefly* his;

and it is useless to reason with him against his own habitual experience.

Before the churches will fully second the efforts of the friends of improvement in psalmody, the religious element, as we have seen, must be restored to our rehearsals, and thus be made distinctly to appear in our performances at church. Let us labor at this point in Christian faithfulness, and our efforts will not be in vain.

V.

MISCELLANEOUS EXTRACTS.

We here subjoin a few gleanings of a more miscellaneous character, which may be allowed to speak for themselves, without a formal introduction. They all have a bearing upon the leading subject of this volume, and some of them were originally furnished by the editor.

A "SERIOUS DIFFICULTY."

But here, in the mind of many intelligent and conscientious worshipers, arises a serious difficulty; and one which they suppose in the present condition of things is insurmountable. The difficulty may be thus stated: If the most successful cultivators in the midst of us—men who devote much time, and labor, and expense, in qualifying themselves for leading the praises of God, in our

A "Serious Difficulty."

worshiping assemblies, are, after all, so deficient in their acquirements as we find them, how can the rest of the community hope to accomplish any thing to the purpose by such means and opportunities as are within their power?

In meeting this difficulty I am willing that it should be fairly appreciated. Let it have its full weight. For argument's sake let it even be regarded as insurmountable. And what is the inference? Plainly, that no remedy is to be found. The churches then have A RIGHT to trample on the art: and individuals to admonish one another in the jargon of dissonant voices and unintelligible articulations. And then, too, we must affirm that the musical art has outlived the period of its utility; and that what has so often been effected in ages of comparative darkness, is now rendered impracticable amid increasing light and accumulating facilities. Our readers are not ready for such a conclusion as this: and will therefore be willing to abandon the premises that lead to it. Then, by every fair principle of inferential argument, I would say the difficulty *ought to be surmounted*. The cause of Zion requires it. The honor of the Christian name requires it. It is a shame for us to be undervaluing the high praises of our God. His language is—"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me." And He has distinctly pointed us to the *constituted method* of praising Him. Have we found out a better method? And may that which God Himself constituted, now be neglected with impunity?

But let us approach this difficulty, and see

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if it can not be fairly met. What is the amount of it? Why, simply this, that because some are "for ever learning without coming to the knowledge of the truth," the rest who have not been studying may as well despair of finding it, and sit down in idleness. We have not so learned Christ. Every man must stand or fall on his own responsibility.

We admit that the difficulty in question has become great; but we assert, fearless of contradiction, that it has grown out of that very general neglect of the subject which it proposes to excuse and perpetuate. The truth is, that often in reference to devotional song, cultivation, where it has been resorted to, has greatly mistaken its end. There has been in this respect, a world of misdirection; and the evil will never be cured till the work is taken in hand on Christian principles.

The maxims of the devotional and of the secular departments, are in some important respects, fundamentally at variance with each other. The one has religious edification for its object: the other amusement. The one makes its appeal chiefly to the heart: the other addresses itself principally to the imagination. The one aims at true pathos, like the eloquence of the pulpit: the other has but the pathos of polished style or dramatic sentimentality. The one excludes the ostentation of display: the other tolerates and encourages it, as a matter of necessity. The one demands true sensibility of soul in reference to the sacred words of the song: the other has little

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to do with words except as furnishing occasion for music.

The points of difference relate not merely to composition and execution but to systems of cultivation. Devotional music, according to the design of the institution, directs its appeals to all, even the humblest classes in community. Secular music, regarded as a fine art, despises every thing like mediocrity, and delights to elevate itself above the level of popular apprehension. In the consistent school for devotional music, it early becomes a leading object to inculcate the distinct enunciation of the sacred text. The pupil must be taught to speak intelligibly, though for a time he does so, more or less, at the expense of melody. Polish of manner is necessarily with him a later acquirement. But, in the secular school, the voice is treated throughout, as a musical instrument of a higher order, scarcely endowed with the power of verbal utterance. It often claims our highest admiration, even in an unknown tongue. Witness for example, the crowds at our Italian operas and concerts, where not a single syllable is understood by the eager listeners!

Such important distinctions as have here been suggested, I am sorry to say, have been for a long time overlooked by the friends of cultivation. Men of secular views, associations, and principles, have so generally taken the lead in this business, that their habits and maxims and methods of management have extensively prevailed without being investigated, or called in question. And who

even now shall dare to rise up against the highest geniuses in Christendom, charging the idols of public favor with the least suspicion of imperfection or fallibility! Who can speak in the gentlest manner of the possibility of misdirection?

I am no enemy to the higher walks of cultivation. Let them have an appropriate place. All I ask is proper discrimination in management. Music, like painting and poetry, will doubtless continue to be cultivated extensively as a secular art. And why should it not? What should hinder? As well might we say that no eloquence should ever be cultivated but that of the pulpit. The pulpit itself is benefited by the lessons of eloquence which it derives from the bar and from popular assemblies. And this is a species of advantage which it could not well afford to lose. At the same time, let it be remembered that the pulpit has a distinct school of its own. It has its own peculiar maxims and associations, and purposes, and principles, which are not to be set aside, in favor of dramatic sentimentality, or invaded by the dictates of every talented declaimer who wins upon the public favor. Real improvement it can indeed derive from almost every source imaginable, without departing from fundamental principles. These are ever to be held inviolate.

We ask for devotional music the same precise thing—the same independence of foreign dictation the same liberty to form a system of its own in reference to religious associations and principles. And surely this is no unreasonable demand. Let this be granted, and the work of

reform will no longer be deemed impracticable. Difficulties of every kind, however insurmountable they might appear under other circumstances, will then be readily obviated.

MUSICAL INSTRUCTION.

A Case Supposed.

I endeavored to show that the difficulties in the way of musical reform can be obviated by establishing, for the cultivation of church music, a system of management which shall correspond, as in the case of pulpit oratory, with the vital claims and principles of religion. But this topic requires further illustration.

Let us then suppose a strong case, and one which has never yet occurred. A church suddenly awakes to the importance of devotional music, and its members design to become active in the work of cultivation. Funds are raised, sufficient to employ an instructer of the highest professional talent; and Monsieur A or Signor B, from the theater or opera, is the man. Allow him if you please (what is not always found in such cases) conciliatory manners, and pure morals, while he is destitute of any special regard for true religion. The school has opened; how does he proceed?

1. He adopts the very convenient maxim that no voices are worthy of being cultivated but those which are already developed, and which appear to be of a higher order. Out of the thousand

Case supposed.

members of the congregation, some twenty or thirty are selected, who happily are professors of religion: the rest are dismissed, as having at present no further concern in the undertaking.

2. He adopts the maxim, too prevalent among men of the secular school, that "psalm-singing injures the voice." Secular songs, therefore, are adopted, for a time at least, as the best means of disciplining the voice, and improving the taste of his pupils.

3. The better to form the taste of his pupils, he continually points out the supposed defects or redundances that exhibit themselves in the style of the best schools or choirs in the vicinity. All strong expressions savor of vehemence; all distinctness of enunciation is but rudeness of manner. Music is one thing and speech is another. Others, if they choose, may *talk* and imagine themselves to be really *singing*. But this is not to sing after the most approved method.

4. But at length the work of cultivation has so far advanced that the rest of the church begin to meet with the singers for the special purpose of edification The words of a psalm or hymn * * * uttered or not must now claim the solemn attention of the performers. The little band of vocalists desire to feel the full import of the words, that their performance may be truly impressive; but their teacher aims only at decent formality:

> "Pious orgies, pious airs,
> *Decent* worship, *decent* prayers."

They desire to feel religiously the full import of

Case supposed.

what they sing, and would be ashamed of lukewarmness in such a service. He desires *not* to feel religiously, and would secretly scorn to be suspected of any such thing. *Their* emotions would incline to kindle and interchange with the varied current of thought suggested by the text before them: *his* emotions would have constant reference to the abstract features of the tune, except here and there in descriptive passages, where something like stage effect might seem to be indicated. At length, then, the parties are quite at issue. The highest expression of sentiment, therefore, must now be virtually abandoned, or the teacher must be discharged. Yet as the latter has been faithful *in his way*, and his pupils are making fine progress, it seems a pity to dismiss him. His school continues, and most of his habits and maxims, and associations of thought and feeling ultimately prevail.

5. Another period of instruction has elapsed, and the teacher and his pupils are assembled to give a sacred concert. Nothing now is too difficult for their execution. The music is enchanting. It has lifted up the souls (*i. e.* imaginations) of the amateurs to the third heavens. All that is lofty or imposing, sublime or beautiful *in description*, is skillfully illustrated by the performers. They act their part well, and the audience are deeply interested. Some are even in raptures. "What music!" "What fine music!" every one exclaims. "What wonderful skill; what an excellent teacher: what fine pupils!" And, *professionally* speaking, this is correct.

Case supposed.

We have an exhibition of masterly skill and exquisite taste, if not of refined sensibility. One thing is wanting: and that the teacher has never intended to supply. Other matters have occupied the exclusive attention of his pupils: and now while themes of the most momentous import are falling from their lips, they are but "acting a part" for the public gratification. The words of prayer and praise dwell on their tongues, but no one suspects them of pretending to engage in a solemn act of worship. They are personating, describing, representing such acts, in a beautiful and imposing manner. But the singers are not worshipers. Real worship is not now the precise object in hand: nor in fact, had it ever been so, during the whole period of their instruction. Even while at church on the Sabbath their conscience had not been remarkably inquisitive.

The concert has ended. The musicians receive due praise. And now—is this the style of the worship which is henceforward to be offered. Or, on the contrary, are we to presume, that singers thus trained, and thus commended for their proficiency, will all at once assume new habits in favor of strict devotional influence? This thing can not be without the intervention of a miracle. Habits formed with such system and care, and success, will continue in a great measure to prevail. The devout minstrels may be as solemn, perhaps, as the deluded devotees of an idol's temple, but their thoughts, in spite of every effort to the contrary, will continue to wander from the subject-matter of song, and their affections to be

either languid or irrelevant. To *them at least*, the exercise of singing will not be remarkable for its spirituality: and, to the congregation at large, it will savor more of tasteful gratification than of religious improvement.

I have supposed such a case as the above, that I might avoid all seeming personalities. I shall not be suspected of undervaluing professional talent as such, or of entering my protest against public performances. Nevertheless, the results I have here depicted are painful living realities amid the thousand churches of the land—results quite palpable to common observation. May I not venture to say that even amid the instances of higher cultivation they are almost universal? Facts and incidents are not wanting in proof of this point. I might allude to the habits and current maxims of professed Christians—to the personal experience of thousands of the devout who fail to be truly edified, either as hearers or performers, though ignorant of the real cause. But I forbear. It will readily be admitted that the results are not in accordance with the ends of the institution of sacred praise; and that their existence is to be attributed, in some measure, to the undue prevalence of secular maxims and principles in our schools of sacred music.

And suppose that a majority of the little band of pupils above mentioned had not been Christian professors; or that instead of the whole church coming up to their assistance and patronage, a very limited number only had co-operated with them, while the rest in due time were to be taken

Case supposed.

by surprise by the sudden introduction of a new style. Or suppose that a whole church, with its pastor and session, had uniformly, for a long period, confided the interests of sacred praise exclusively to the non-professing members of the congregation, as a mere matter of decent formality belonging of right to them alone; and that some forty or fifty of the youth, for the mere purpose of social enjoyment, had banded together, employed their own teacher, and from first to last assumed the entire direction of every thing in relation to the interests of church music! Who does not see in every such case, that abuses of the institution would continue to abound and prevail. Even were the chosen teacher a devoted Christian he could effect very little in the way of reform. He would be as a spark of fire amid the snows of winter.

These, I am sorry to say, are not merely suppositious cases, nor cases of rare occurrence; nor are they by any means the most adverse that could be named. Very far from it. I could speak of long and bitter animosities and contentions among the members of a choir; of teachers not only ignorant and vulgar, but depraved in morals and principles; of whole churches deprecating the existence of a singing school as "an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Yes, and of beloved ministers, too, who had been warned in the very schools of the prophets always to "let the singing alone if they would keep *out* of trouble;" and who to the end of their lives scru-

pulously adhering to this rule of policy, were *always in* trouble.

How evident is it, then that little can be done in the way of reform without extensive mutual co-operation! The churches must once more take the interests of sacred praise into their own hands, as in days of old, calling upon all the members of a congregation indiscriminately to co-operate with them, according to their various talents and opportunities. Then this interest will stand upon the right basis, as in the case of Sabbath Schools, Missionary, Bible, Tract and Temperance Societies. The cause, by the blessing of God, will then be seen to prosper. Better teachers will arise. Better maxims, principles, habits, and associations will begin to prevail. Then there will be, as in the days of old, union of heart and voice. Cultivation will advance on right principles, as ascertained by experience; and the churches will begin to be edified, in a manner hitherto unknown in modern times.

This would not be a novel experiment. More than twenty years ago it was tried by a few churches in this city with delightful success. But the impression has disappeared in the changes of population.

WANT OF TEACHERS.

But where shall suitable teachers be obtained? and how shall they be supported? Here are two very important inquiries. Let the churches answer the latter as they should do, and the former

will soon find a solution. If the office of teacher is not sufficiently respectable to secure general co-operation. let them make it so. If it is not sufficiently lucrative to prevent starvation, let them make it so. The means are in their power: and they should remember that the workman is worthy of his hire. There would soon be no want of musical talent in the churches, if the subject was properly taken in hand; but while it continues to be neglected, we must not think it strange if the office is often filled with unworthy incumbents.

We have seen that a fearful amount of responsibility is resting upon those who lead our devotions in the songs of praise. Nor does it rest upon these alone. It rests upon the silent listeners and upon the neglecters of this service: and especially does it rest upon those who willingly consign it to improper hands, knowing that without a miracle the true interests of edification will not be sustained.

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION.

We have said that the claims of a mere *personated* worship, can not be secured, unless the pupils are well instructed as to the sentiment of the themes. and are induced to make the latter the subject of meditation while they sing. But further preparation is wanting to secure the ends of true devotion.

Let us here compare the language of the con-

secrated themes with that which is usually employed in social prayer.

We are accustomed on all ordinary occasions, to pray for mercy and forgiveness in moderate terms, lest the language should seem to indicate more emotion than is usually felt: but in song we hesitate not to employ the language of great earnestness, as in the fifty-first Psalm, and in the hymn

"Mercy, O thou Son of David."

We often pray for conformity to God and for the spirit of obedience, as if doubting of our own desires and motives: but in song unhesitatingly exclaim,

"O how I love thy holy law."

On occasions of thanksgiving we make moderate professions of gratitude in prayer, and acknowledge our deficiency in the offering, but in song, we break forth in the fullest emphasis of meaning,

"Bless the Lord, O my soul"—or
"Yes, I will bless thee, O my God."

We pray for fixedness of thought: but the Psalmist exclaims—"My heart is *fixed*, O God, my heart is FIXED." Our satisfaction and delight in the divine government are generally expressed in moderate terms while at prayer; and often we do no more than ask for the grace of submission: but in praise there is no such hesitation. We call upon every thing that breathes—upon nature animate and inanimate—

"O for a shout of sacred joy,
To God the sovereign King."

We call on the rocks, and the hills, and the valleys, and the waves, and islands, and depths of the sea to join in the anthems of praise, and rejoice in the holy sovereignty of God.

Now let these deep supplications and acknowledgments, and these high ascriptions of praise, involving such unreserved commitment of soul, be transferred to the office of prayer; and let us suppose that those who lead in the office habitually neglect all preparations for the solemn employment, excepting such as relate to manner—that they notice the language in reference to such things as tones and inflections, and meditate upon it chiefly in regard to oratorical effect or imaginative sentimentality. What would be thought of such conduct? *Hypocrisy! hypocrisy!* would be the universal cry. The disclosure of such conduct would excite a general burst of holy indignation.

But how is the case materially altered by this transfer of themes? Is solemn mockery any less offensive in praise than in prayer? And will the consideration of crotchets and quavers, and time-tables, and accents and emphases, and cadences, and melodic and harmonic relations, in connection with the phraseology of the themes, and of mere musical expression, have any direct tendency to induce such high and holy and unreserved commitment of soul? Far from it. They will have the opposite tendency, unless the mind is prepared by solemn meditation and deep searchings of heart. A few general hints from the teacher in connection with formal irrelevant supplications

will be nothing to the purpose. The important habit of uniting holy affections with such hallowed themes of religious song, will never be acquired without a more thorough and consistent course of religious training. The man who leads in prayer is allowed in some sense to speak as he feels: but those who lead in praise are required to feel what in the whole circle of religious topics they may be suddenly called upon to speak. Which of the two parties, according to this view of the subject, should seem to need the highest measure of religious preparation? Let the churches answer this question.

RIGHT USE OF WORDS IN SINGING.

There are those standing high in the ranks of cultivation, who either deny the importance of verbal themes, or depreciate their value in religious music. Music has an expressive language of its own. Without the aid of words it can often speak to the heart, if not to the understanding. It can call forth emotions of sorrow and joy: it can encourage hope, kindle the feelings of solemnity, and arouse the entire sympathies of a congregation. This, we shall be told, is the highest pride of the art, and what constitutes its chief excellence.

But who shall assure us that such appeals of sentimentality will generally meet with an intelligent response from the listener, and that in reference to legitimate objects? Sorrow, joy, hope, solemnity, and other kindred emotions, may fail to

be excited, or they may be called forth by wrong objects. There is a sorrow of the world that worketh death, a joy of the hypocrite which is but for a moment, and a hope of the self-deceived which is as the spider's web. There is a solemnity too, which is as really unproductive as if it came from the temples of idolatry. The language of musical expression has its importance. But generally speaking, it is of a nature too ambiguous and indefinite to answer the ends of religious devotion without the aid of an interpreter.

We have also to meet an objection which comes from the opposite quarter. The consecrated themes, it is averred, are too solemn and momentous in their import to be made the bases of musical practice. It is as if the rhetorician or the orator were to exercise his pupils scholastically in the language of prayer. This objection is entitled to the utmost respect, for it is not the offspring of a captious disposition. The endless repetition of solemn words in the drilling exercises, has doubtless a tendency to lessen their importance in the mind of the pupils: and great injury has often arisen from this kind of management. To prevent such an evil, two different courses have been occasionally pursued. The one has been to select such words as are comparatively unimportant for the themes of song; and the other to publish the tunes entirely without words. The first of those methods seems inconsistent with true adaptation; and the other leaves the subject without any suitable provision.

But the questionable practice referred to, is

not the one we are advocating. Music-syllables, and not the themes of song, should for the most part be employed in the drilling exercises. Even in the practice of enunciation we need not be constantly resorting to the consecrated themes. The latter must be occasionally used, if pupils are to be duly disciplined; but exercises of this nature should in general be short, always earnest and definite, and free from every appearance of levity. To such a restricted use of the themes, there can be no solid objection.

IRRELEVANT MENTAL ASSOCIATIONS.

In circles where there is but little taste or cultivation, the principle of association will not be extensively recognized. Hence the most unfortunate adaptations of music to sacred words which can well be conceived, bring to certain classes of worshipers no irrelevant ideas; while to other classes they convey every thing which is offensive to taste or revolting to pious sensibility. The old amatory ballad "O saw ye not my father?" for example, was some forty years ago furnished with a miserable parody, setting forth Lady Washington's lament for her absent husband, "Saw ye not my hero?" and was thenceforth associated with all the small peddling of training days throughout the nation. But in process of time a second poetaster furnished to the same silly music a parody upon the parody, in the shape of a hymn: and thenceforth "Saw ye not my Saviour?" must be

admitted into religious circles, with its double relish of amatory and gingerbread associations!

In circles where there is cultivation, however, the influence of this principle will be manifest. The finest tunes as well as the poorest may be supplied with unfavorable associations. Those which have been too frequently connected with drilling exercises, that would try the patience of the teacher and the perseverance of his pupils, will necessarily suggest to the latter thoughts of weariness and feelings of lassitude in the hours of devotion. Those which have been connected with thoughtless indifference, or levity, or social amusement, will in seasons of worship call forth other emotions than those of a devotional nature; and the same is true of tunes which in practice have generally excited no better feelings than those of musical exhilaration. The kindred melody is sure in such cases, to bring back its scenes, its pleasures, its pains, or its levities, with sufficient vividness to hinder meditation, and diminish if not destroy religious enjoyment. This is doubtless the reason why, in seasons of special religious interest, recourse has been so often had to tunes which to every cultivated ear seem so strangely inappropriate. To the mind of those who introduce them, they convey no irrelevant associations; while the current psalm and hymn tunes are strongly identified with ideas of impatience, dullness, languor or formality, or perhaps with sentiments of unseasonable exhilaration. The change brings relief and enjoyment to the

innovators: but to those who have discrimination, only that which is irrelevant and disgusting.

On the other hand, amateur and practical musicians of the secular school have, in regard to devotional music, unfavorable associations, which they themselves are the last to discover. The strongest appeals from the art to which they have been accustomed to respond, are those which arise from imaginative personation. The pathos, beauty, or sublimity which they habitually recognize, even in religious pieces, is at best but the offspring of tasteful sentimentality, held out to the listener for the purpose of braving his censure or extorting his commendation. When under the influence of such habits the intelligent Christian comes into the solemn place of worship, where the pure affections of the heart are to be drawn forth, he feels the need of an entirely different class of associations to aid him in his devotions. And he feels this the more deeply in proportion to the depth of his religious experience. His cherished habits of musical enjoyment are now against him. The enchantments of harmony and rhythm and melody and executional display which in other circumstances would awaken enthusiasm, would now be impertinent and mischievous, and he flies to the other extreme for relief. He requires only a few plain harmonic combinations, almost without rhythm, and with melody so reduced, subdued, and chastened, as to make little impression upon the mass of the community: and this, judging from his own peculiar experience, he very naturally mistakes for the suggestions of

refined taste and critical discrimination. But others, who will have formed different habits and dissimilar associations, will, with just as good reason, dissent from his decisions.

Now there is an obvious remedy for the evils to which we have alluded, a remedy which is full and efficient. It is found in a *rectified application* of the very principle which produces them. Let all the kindred melodies of religious music which are worthy of the name, be supplied in practice with relevant associations. Let music for ordinary religious occasions be cultivated in connection with that kind of Christian influence which it will be required to exert in the house of worship, and it will be found to do its proper office. Let revival songs be cultivated in a revival spirit, and the occasion for mal-adaptation will have been removed. And finally, let Christians who have been long subjected to secular associations, so far relinquish their former habits, as to pursue the practice of religious song under the full influence of a devotional spirit. This in due time will supply them with new associations and new inferences with regard to style. The principle in question is as powerful as it is simple. It operates almost with the force of instinct. It never mistakes its end. The cultivators of devotional song therefore should remember that what they sow in this respect they will assuredly reap. Especially if in such a field as this they persist in sowing tares, must they make up their mind to receive tares as the fruit of their labors. Christian worshipers, who will not be persuaded

to connect devotional habits and associations with the practice of devotional music, will be as sure to have irrelevant thoughts and feelings in the house of God, as if they had been negligent of religious influences in connection with prayer. How can such persons fail to see that the oblation they are offering is as empty as the idle winds! "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs," says the prophet, "for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

We have spoken of a full and efficient remedy; but how is it to be applied? Public sentiment is dilatory in its operations, and the teacher is called into immediate action. Here is a difficulty which demands affectionate forbearance and patient application. Let the teacher be right himself, and he will be likely to exert the required influence upon others. If in the religious revival he is sometimes saluted with a parody upon "Mol Brook," or "Auld Lang Syne," let him not complain, but bow his head in secret prayer till the agony is over. If a favorite tune has been spoiled by wrong associations, let him drop it and try another in connection with better influences; and if the fastidious amateur is ready to make undue accusations of deficiency in refinement, let him bear it patiently. There will be no use in murmuring. In these minor matters let him become in some sense "all things to all men," but let him hold on to the great leading principle of exerting religious influences; and, by the blessing of God his labors will not be in vain. New associations will be gradually forming, and in proportion

as these prevail, the difficulties will be obviated.

But what shall be said of the management of a teacher whose whole manner is adverse to religious influences? who neglects discipline, or exercises it with irritating severity; who at one moment chafes the mind of his pupils by the indulgence of peevishness, and at another seeks to allay irritation by sallies of wit or efforts at pleasantry; whose whole mind is a tempest of conflicting emotions, and these at variance with the spirit of the consecrated themes?

ILL-ORDERED RHAPSODY OF THE MASTERS.

The attention of choirs is not confined to psalmody. Sacred themes have been extensively employed as the bases of solos, duetts, trios, quartettes, choruses, sentences, collects, anthems, motets, cantatas, and oratorios, and all this *ostensibly*, for the purpose of illustrating and enforcing their meaning. Yet many of these pieces, embracing much musical talent, are very far from being devotional in their tendency: others will prove so only in circumstances favorable to the design of the piece: and others still, only when they can secure a specific class of hearers, and a corresponding style of execution. These distinctions, important as they are, have, for the most part, been imperfectly understood. They do not generally appear in the title of the piece, or the peculiar texture of the composition: nor yet in the amount of interest which the music is found

to secure. Indeed, some of the most ingenious and fascinating pieces which can be named, are, of all others, the furthest removed from a true devotional tendency.

A single example may here serve as an illustration. That favorite theme of the great masters, "Glory be to God on high," &c., when effectively uttered with Christian feeling, in the music of some appropriate chant or psalmodic strain, is felt to be devotional. Also, when it forms the subject of a short anthem which neither surprises us by its novelty, nor fascinates us by its musical attractions, we may receive from it the same appeal And in places where there is much taste and cultivation, or on occasions of special interest, or among denominations of worshipers accustomed to loud exclamations and responses, such an anthem might possess more musical attractions, without hazarding the loss of its devotional character. But when the same theme is made the basis of such rich, elaborate, vehement, enthusiastic strains as Haydn or Beethoven often apply to it in masses for the Catholic service, we feel at once the presence of another class of influences. The performers are no longer the simple-hearted worshipers as before: for their attention is engrossed by the details of execution, and misled by the fascination of the music. The composer himself, perchance, had been no better employed when he produced the piece. He was a mere personator of religious worship, and mistook the nature of experimental religion: or, what seems most probable, he regarded himself in the light of a grand, moral

painter. The worshipers were sitting for the canvas, and he could flatter them at his pleasure. He could make them as frantic as he chose in their devotions, without involving in his own proper person any real commitment of soul. He could fill them with all the vehemence of military enthusiasm, or the wild uproar of an infuriated mob, without appearing, in the eye of ordinary observation, to surpass the limits of *scenic* propriety. That which in oratory would be censured as "overstepping the modesty of nature," or stigmatized as sheer rant or fanaticism, must here be regarded as the "fine frenzy" of the artist; and if there is really more of the spirit of earth than of heaven in the composition, the circumstance will scarcely be noticed in the presence of so much that is "divine" in the music. The music is so grand, so imposing in its character—so learned, so full of genius—so exhilarating, and at times even playful in its character—who can help admiring it! It is the composition of a great master, *powerfully* applied to sacred words; and is found susceptible of *strong* effects. This suffices for the generality of executants; and were one to raise a single doubt as to the religious tendencies of such productions, he would be regarded, in some quarters, as worse than a musical heretic.

But we have counted well the cost. We are willing to brave all censure of this kind, and express our deepest conviction, that the frequent and habitual application of such noisy and exhilarating movements to sacred themes, has of necessity with respect to most minds a desecrating tendency,

amounting in thousands of instances to the sin of profanation! In saying this, we know that we speak the experience of multitudes who feel the evil, without sufficiently apprehending the cause. Every inviting theme is liable to the same species of abuse—and there is therefore the most urgent necessity of enlightened discrimination. Public concerts and oratorios as usually conducted, will not supply the desideratum, or lessen the existing evil. While sacred themes habitually are made the mere pretext of musical enjoyment or display, they will, of necessity, be abused: but when they are carefully taken up in a truly Christian spirit, and the music is applied to them for legitimate purposes, it will be easy to discover, by actual experiment, what strains of music can best illustrate and enforce their meaning. The difference between musical rhapsody and devotional song, is as great as that which distinguishes poetic enthusiasm from the pure love of religion: but an adequate knowledge of this difference will be gained only by experience, where the circumstances are favorable.

DISCRIMINATION IN PSALMODY.

Among the current psalm and hymn tunes there are endless diversities which pass unnoticed by the ordinary observer, but which are of great account in the true process of adaptation. To those who have paid little attention to this subject, such tunes, for example, as Old Hundred, Luther's Hymn, Winchester, London, St. Ann's, &c., preserving a similar appearance in notation, will be

regarded as possessing an almost entire uniformity of character; while to the better informed, every good tune in the catalogue will be seen to possess its own distinctive attributes: and no two, perhaps, among the whole would be regarded as equally appropriate to the same psalm or hymn.

The kind of discrimination here referred to is of great importance to the interests of church music. When it is wanting, a psalm or hymn, though sung in a faultless manner, will often, as by mechanical necessity, be deprived of its peculiar interest; while to the singers and to the congregation at large, the real cause of failure will not be suspected. But this discrimination is the result, not so much of genius or native susceptibility, as of practical observation. It is gained by actual experience of results where circumstances are favorable: and never, perhaps, in a solitary instance, in schools where religious music is cultivated in connection with irrelevant associations. Unless our general position in favor of devotional influences, therefore, is to be sustained, we must make up our mind to forego in psalmody, all that is sweet and hallowed and delightful in musical adaptation. The generality of teachers and leaders will remain, in this respect, what we now find them, as destitute of delicate discrimination, almost, as if nature had denied them all power of conception.

SINGING IN FAMILY WORSHIP.

Devotional singing in the family, exerts a happy influence upon the piety of a Christian

household. We refer not here to mere excellence in music: *that* may be found where there is no devotion. But there is such a thing as the utterance of some chosen hymn, with the mind fixed upon God and Divine things, while devotion kindles into a sweet and heavenly flame. The mind thus expresses itself with emotional energy, while the music adds power to the sentiment, and the sentiment adds sweetness to the music.

Mere musical practice, however conducted, is a different thing. Such familiar lines, for example as

> "Lord, thou wilt hear me when I pray;
> I am forever thine,"

may, while sung as a lesson to some plain tune, appear quite common-place and deficient in interest. But how full of meaning are they, when the heart seizes upon them in the act of solemn worship! Then they imply entire confidence in a prayer-hearing God, to whose service the soul is irrevocably and forever devoted. Many a familiar hymn is full of meaning. The mind should fix upon it: the heart should be schooled in relation to it, till we can make it our own in the sincere utterance of devotion. Such a practice, under the Divine blessing, would not fail to increase our piety, and add interest to family worship.

Primitive Christians understood this subject; the Reformers understood it, and in their days, whole villages, at morning and at evening, would become vocal with hymns of praise. Similar scenes have been occasionally witnessed in later times. Wherever such a practice has prevailed,

its influence has been felt and acknowledged. It is a sweet source of comfort and of edification. This affectionate union of hearts and voices within the family circle, has seemed like "heaven begun below." Its advantages are manifold; it is one of the best remedies against dullness and formality; it is a check upon wandering thoughts and unseasonable emotions; and it sheds a hallowed influence upon the reading of the Scriptures, and upon our supplications and acknowledgments in the exercise of prayer. So many advantages ought not to be lost. In a world like ours, and at a period like the present, we need every help against the strong tendencies to religious declension. Activities in social life are not diminishing; the spirit of enterprise is awake; claims of business are becoming more urgent; and temptations to worldliness are waxing stronger and stronger. Here, however, is one of the methods Divinely constituted, which may assist us against every entanglement.

Some of its advantages are peculiar. Selections of Scripture are too often ill-chosen, or read indifferently, or too rapidly to be appreciated. Our voluntary language in prayer often becomes the index of comparative indifference. But the sweet themes of inspiration, as they flow in song with measured accents from our lips, will bear testimony against us, if we are not sufficiently spiritual to make them really our own in the presence of Omniscience. They thus may, in the apostolic sense, become our daily teachers and admonishers.

Singing in Families.

The practice we are recommending has still other advantages. It will of necessity lead us to acquire some measure of musical knowledge: for otherwise our singing would be comparatively ineffective. With a little instruction, all the younger members of a family would learn to unite in the songs of praise. The influence would soon extend itself, and the hallowed sentimentalities thus clustering around the domestic altar would accompany us to the house of God, and add sweetness, solemnity, and spirituality to our vocal utterances in the congregation. Habit has great influence upon our devotions: and lips which are perpetually sealed at home, will seldom be opened to much purpose in the solemn assembly.

What has occasioned such an extensive neglect of singing in family worship? and what can be done to revive the practice? To have shown the importance of the duty, or the preciousness of the privilege, will be of little service, unless we go a step further, and point out the cause and the remedy for this neglect.

1. We might refer to the general neglect of the study of music in Christian families. Music has not been made a general branch of religious education. More attention is now paid to it than formerly, yet we do not witness, as might be expected, a corresponding revival of the practice we are considering. The question reaches further back, Why has there been such a general neglect of musical knowledge?

2. We might refer to the general error as to musical capabilities: for the want of physical pow-

ers discourages effort, and annihilates obligation. But how came this error to prevail? It could not have arisen in times of culture, against the dictates of practical experience. It did not always exist; it is comparatively a modern prejudice. And further, since much has been done of late for the removal of this error, why is it so slow to yield? and even where it has been abandoned, why do we not witness a corresponding change of practice?

3. We might also refer to the defective experience of Christians in this matter. Reading of the Scriptures, and prayer, and religious conversation, all are profitable exercises, and have an enlivening tendency; but praise, when uttered in song, often seems to savor of dullness or formality. Hymns, too, have become familiar and common-place. Tunes, sung indifferently, have a deadening influence: or, sung skillfully, attract to themselves the attention which is due to the sentiment of the words. Such experiences are discouraging, and excuses are easily found for the relinquishment of a practice which seems detrimental to devotion. But again, we must look further back. What has been the cause of all this defective experience? And why does not experience improve with the general increase of musical cultivation? Great changes are being effected in the public taste for music: but perhaps the practice we are advocating was never less prevalent than at the present time, while musical conventions are being held in almost every portion of the country.

We are driven to the conclusion, therefore, that

the cause for which we are seeking is to be found in the *modern methods of musical cultivation*. Music was designed by the Creator as a means to certain important ends, and should be cultivated with strict reference to those ends, whether social, moral, or religious. But this is not done. Witness our schools, rehearsals, concerts, oratorios, conventions. Art is the great desideratum, as ministering to the pleasures of taste. For mere social purposes, this might answer, provided the sentiments excited were always such as we may innocently cherish. But to say nothing as to the frequent violations of this rule in social gatherings, and on public occasions, the rule in the cultivation of devotional singing is, and has been for a long time, extensively disregarded.

In this species of music, the mind should be trained by precepts, by examples, and by its own frequent, unembarrassed efforts to fix itself, in moments of devotion, upon the great object of Christian worship, and upon the solemn truths and motives of our holy religion. But instead of it, instruction usually serves to confine the mind rigorously to the details of art and the sentimentalities of taste. The mind is literally bound, and fettered, and drilled into this servitude, without being allowed to break loose from its confinement till the unfortunate habit is established.

Go almost where you will, and the same general practice is manifest. Even where religious principles are inculcated, practice is at variance with them; the mind is pre-occupied by artistic considerations, so that it can not disentangle itself,

when it chooses to make the attempt. Comparative insensibility to Divine things, and formality in exercises of praise, inevitably result from such instructions. It can not be otherwise. We need look no further for the cause of general indifference to the claims of devotional singing, either in the family or elsewhere. The results we deplore are just such as ought to have been anticipated from such a course of musical training.

If, then, we would see the right influences restored to devotional singing, either public or private, we must supply the only remedy. The mind must be taught, not only by precepts and illustrations, the nature of praise as a religious exercise, but it must also be made, by constant practical efforts, capable of disentangling itself at any time from the trammels of art, and the fascinations of taste; while in the act of singing sweetly, it can employ itself in heavenly contemplations.

THE END.

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